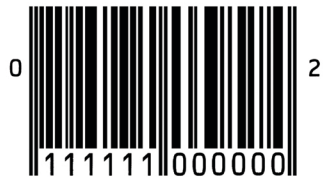


MUSIC TELEVISION®

THE ART OF MTV

THE MTV: MUSIC TELEVISION LOGO

AUGUST 1, 1981-FEBRUARY 8, 2010

EDITED BY FRED SEIBERT

FREDFILMS PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY #9

MTV's Shape-Shifting Revolution:

The logo that became a visual anthem fusing pop with swagger.

Rock 'n' Roll, for a generation, attitude street-style

Its bold, design perfectly the chaos, and cool of revolution it helped ignite.

ever morphing embodied creativity, music

FRED FILMS
PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY #9

THE ART OF MTV

THE MTV: MUSIC TELEVISION LOGO AUGUST 1, 1981 - FEBRUARY 8, 2010

DESIGNED BY FRANK OLINSKY, PAT GORMAN, PATTI ROGOFF

I want
my
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

THE ART OF MTV

THE MTV: MUSIC TELEVISION LOGO

AUGUST 1, 1981 - FEBRUARY 8, 2010

EDITED BY FRED SEIBERT

THE FREDFILMS PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY #9

The Art of MTV
The MTV logo

©2025, FredFilms, Inc.
All rights reserved.

The MTV: Music Television logo
is a registered trademark of
Paramount Global, New York.

Designed by
Manhattan Design, New York City:
Pat Gorman, Frank Olinsky, Patti Rogoff

First edition
April 2025

To Frank and Alan

No dedication could begin to convey
my admiration for
the work we've done together,
and I'm completely incapable of saying
what you've each meant to my life.

"Our consistency ***is*** our inconsistency."

– Fred Seibert to Tom Freston, Spring 1981

Frank Olinsky
@Manhattan Design

Preface

I'm friends with Frank Olinsky.

Aside from the fact that we've been buddies for 70 years, I've had an up close look at one of the most talented artists in America. Seriously, even at five years old it was clear that this guy had it, and he was an idol, to me (still!), and all the kids on the block. His skills as an illustrator, a designer, sure. But it's Frank's imaginations and passions that has set him apart. At first it was model airplanes, then baseball cards, cartoons, Ed "Big Daddy" Roth's Rat Fink, everything that American mid-century pop culture had to offer.

Then what really set Frank on fire was rock'n'roll.

A decade and a half later I got the job as the original creative director of what was to become MTV: Music Television, there was no one else I was going to call to design the channel's logo. For about a minute I considered Milton Glaser, the pioneering graphic designer who shaped the visual civilization of the back half of the 20th century. But come on! Frank introduced me to The Monkees, The Who and Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention, to name just a few. He designed a blues album cover for my indie record company in the

70s. Milton? no way! It had to be Frank.
Frank and his partners at Manhattan Design, Pat Gorman and Patti Rogoff, were tortured by my indecisions to come up with the historic mark for MTV. And historic is was. Frank's initial illustrations –using the wide face of the giant 'M' as a canvas– set the stage for the hundreds of artists who folded, spindled and decorated it with their own visions for the next 29 years. It was so revolutionary that often, dozens of designs would be used all at once in short, animated network identifications produced by my key creative partner Alan Goodman.

The stories of its beginnings are recounted in some of the reprinted magazine articles to follow. Suffice it to say, Manhattan Design created a classic that would change the way media looked at itself, dare I say it... forever. And in fact, with MTV being an early pioneer in the exporting of itself across the Earth, graphic design would resonate with its influence for a generation.

Even after MTV banished music entirely, the work lived on. Just check out the MTV Store and eBay... notice that all of the MTV T-shirts available today are the vintage Music Television logo designs, not the freakess offspring it became. (Yes, of course, I'm biased.)

Was I surprised that Pat, Frank and Patti created something so wonderful, so fantastic, so fresh. No. But, even I couldn't have imagined the impact its eventual impact.

Frank and I have continued to work together in the many years since I left MTV. But honestly, that's nothing compared to the feelings we've shared for all that time.

Lucky me. I'm friends with Frank Olinksy, my hero.

Fred Seibert
West Hollywood
2025

(L-R)
Susan Olinsky,
Frank Olinsky,
Fred Seibert,
Elena Seibert

Picnicing across from 40 Old Town Lane, Halesite, Long Island, New York Circa 1957

Introduction

MTV's Shape-Shifting Revolution: How a Logo Became Rock 'n' Roll

By Vivienne Hartwell

Few corporate logos have ever had the audacity to behave like the very culture they represent. But MTV's original mark—a hulking, block-lettered "M" defaced by a graffiti-style "TV"—was never meant to be just a logo. It was a statement. It was young, it was punk, it was pop. It was everything MTV would soon become: anarchic, vibrant, and constantly in motion. It refused to sit still.

Designed in 1981 by the Manhattan Design trio of Frank Olinsky, Pat Gorman, and Patti Rogoff, guided by MTV's first creative director Fred Seibert, the logo didn't just represent music television—it was music television. And, like rock 'n' roll itself, it just would not stay the same.

A Logo Born from Rebellion

Whether it's rock'n'roll, hip hop, or even the crooners and canaries of the early 20th century, popular music charted the excited blood pressures of young people coming into their adulthoods.

Promotional photograph by Manhattan Design 1981
Frank Olinsky & unknown model

That's the real story of the MTV logo. Defiance, improvisation, romance... and sheer visual anarchy.

Olinsky, Gorman, and Rogoff worked out of a cramped Greenwich Village studio, a design firm so new that they named it "Manhattan Design" to sound more established than it was. When Seibert, a childhood friend of Olinsky, approached them with the challenge of branding "The Music Channel," a 24-hour television network, they knew they had to reject every traditional design principle they'd ever learned.

Early logo concepts predictably leaned on musical symbols –notes, waves, and guitars; they even suggested a new name: "Rock Box"– but those were swiftly discarded. The breakthrough came when a new name –MTV: Music Television– presented itself, and an oversized, dimensional "M" appeared on a sketch. It looked bold, but it needed something—a rejection of its own structure. Inspired by punk graffiti and the DIY ethic of the burgeoning downtown art scene, Olinsky spray-painted a raw, scrawled "TV" over it. "The next thing you knew, the now-famous 'TV' lettering appeared," he later recalled. The designers adjusted proportions and fine-tuned the logo's form, but the essence remained: a bold monolith vandalized by a movement.

That rebellious spirit extended beyond its look. The final design was nearly thrown away multiple times by MTV's corporate overseers, who saw it as too aggressive, too messy, too non-traditional. "The sketches actually ended up in a Warner Amex wastebasket several times before being reconsidered," Olinsky later said. If that's not rock 'n' roll, what is?

Motion as Identity: The First "Living" Logo

Perhaps the most radical decision came after the logo was approved: it would never have an official color. Seibert stared at various suggestions on his wall –still in the thrall of the traditional canons of brand design– and, constantly flipping his decision from one to another, eventually fixated on a series of playful, illustrative versions Olinsky had prepared.

"Fuck it!" he thought to himself. "We're TV, moving pictures, let's just use them all. And all at once." Unlike the static, highly protected brand marks of other networks, MTV's identity would be fluid. "Just like rock music always changes, the logo should also," Olinsky explained. That philosophy had never been applied to branding before. Instead of a singular design, the outlines remained the same, but the mark itself became a kind of canvas. Hundreds of artists, directors and producers who would eventually come to work

with the logo, and this way, each one could make it uniquely their own.

For the first two years of the channel, MTV created an ever-evolving series of animated network IDs—produced by MTV's Alan Goodman with indie studios like Buzzco, Colossal Pictures, Broadcast Arts, and Eli Noyes—that took their work, but definitely, not themselves, seriously. In their hands, the logo was twisted, exploded, melted, rebuilt, and, dare we say, reimagined. These animations, which played in between music videos, became an art form in themselves.

Just as Seibert had hoped. He compared them to "the moving-picture equivalents of classic rock and pop album covers from the '60s and '70s", a perfect analogy. Just as The Rolling Stones' S*ticky Fingers* or The Clash's *London Calling* visually encapsulated their music's raw energy, MTV's ever-morphing logo became the graphic representation of the wild, unpredictable, genre-mashing music scene it championed.

Corporate Resistance and the Helvetica Compromise

Naturally, the suits at MTV were terrified. "The corporate types hated everything about it," Seibert recalled. They only approved it after insisting that the "problem" must be the design of the

words “Music Television” beneath the giant M.

Huh? What?! When that logotype was set in institutional Helvetica the logo was suddenly OK. The irony is that this concession, a desperate attempt to inject a sense of respectability, was later discarded when the logo was... redesigned? ...in 2010. The brand had long since outgrown the need for an explanation.

A Legacy of Chaos and Creativity

More than 40 years later, MTV’s original logo remains one of the most inventive and influential in television history. It wasn’t just a symbol—it was a cultural force, reflecting the chaotic energy of rock, pop, and hip-hop as they evolved through the decades. It pioneered motion-based branding, inspired generations of designers, and proved that a great logo doesn’t have to follow the rules.

MTV was never meant to be static. Neither was its logo. And that’s why it still endures.

Vivienne Hartwell is a writer and cultural historian. A lifelong admirer of bold, rebellious design, Hartwell explores how art and commerce collide to create enduring visual icons. She is based in New York, where she continues to document the ever-changing landscape of design and media.

Manhattan Design promotional postcard 1981
Ape: Frank Olinsky Woman: Pat Gorman

As far as I can remember, this article in a now defunct trade rag was the first written on the MTV logo. It's from June 1982, about 10 months after the network launched.

(Please note that I removed the sections about the "other epic quests for corporate identity," including ones for NBC and Nickelodeon. If only because my partner Alan Goodman and I wiped out the "new" Nickelodeon identity mentioned within two years, replaced it with their now iconic, shape shifting orange logo [designed by Tom Corey and Scott Nash], which lasted 25+ years and established Nick as a brand in its own right.)

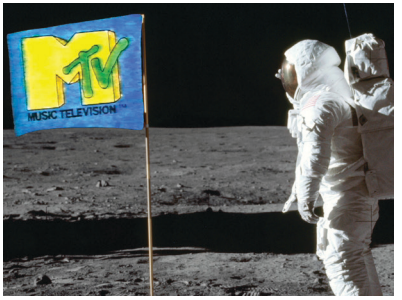
CableVision cover: Frank Olinsky @Manhattan Design, Greenwich Village, NYC

–FS

New Network Look

HAIRY, FAT & FRIZZ

Where they got the M in the MTV and other epic quests for corporate identity.



By Jean Bergantini Grillo
June 7, 1982

CableVision
The news and features weekly of the cable television industry

...

The original MTV logo started out as a poorly executed Polaroid shot of a hand holding a tomato. Despite its causal charm, it never saw the light of day.

Creating a network, channel or corporate identity is both a subtle and ruthless thing. When we look at the changes undergone by the IDs of HBO, Nickelodeon, Showtime and The Entertainment Channel, whim [sic] clearly works in tune with the all-important corporate message. This is why the MTV: Music Television story is a good place to start. It tells how breaking all the rules can make for a superb marketing game.

The graphic artists at Manhattan Design were hired in May of 1980 by Fred Seibert, WASEC's vice president of Creative Services. Their task was to give an image to Warner's planned rock and pop basic cable channel. Seibert not only liked the newly-formed group's work, he had grown up with its founder, Frank Olinsky, in Huntington, New York.

"We went to elementary school together," Seibert explains. "I've known Frank since I was four years old." More important," Seibert says, "we had listened together to the Beach Boys and the Beatles when they first came out."

Seibert, fresh out of programming radio stations, was in charge of creating an identity for what was then called "The Music Channel." He was looking for something that captured his own youthful rapture with contemporary music. He was also looking to work cheap. The Polaroid sent by Manhattan Design was meant to represent a rough approximation of a hand embracing a musical note. Improvised on

the spot, the photo shows a dimly lit arm thrust out with a ripe tomato in hand. A pencil represents the "note's" stem and includes a paper flag tape to the eraser. The drawing which resulted was nevertheless a hit.

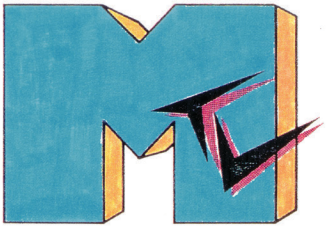
"I loved it," Seibert says. "It was something that could move. It was alive. It represented real feeling for music."

Rick Nielsen, guitarist in Cheap Trick. with the proposed logo of The Music Channel

There was one small problem. Seibert wanted the logo to incorporate the works "The Music Channel." "It was a real business issue. People have got to remember who and what you are." Seibert asked Manhattan Design to unify the worlds and logo and the result was an unqualified disaster.

"It was awful," Seibert notes unabashedly. Alan Goodman, formerly with CBS, had now joined the MTV "Music Channel" design team and together he, Seibert and Manhattan Design (including Pat Gorman and Patty Rogoff), all went back to the drawing board. They began playing around with just the letters MTV and created mounds of discarded permutations. One day, Seibert recalls picking up a crumpled page from the pile of rejects. "You don't want that," he was told. "The M's too fat." Seibert replied, "This is it."

Seibert calls the massive M "classic," the smaller "tv," daring. In the first draft, the tv was sprayed on graffiti style, but Seibert wanted to avoid that and the drips were dropped. The design crew, however, continued to fool around with the outrageous coverings for that stately M, building it out of red bricks, wooden strips, zebra stripes, polka dots –even the yellow-and-black of a Checker Cab.



A life of its own

"A good ID must have shape, size and simplicity," Seibert says, "but it also must stand out from the 30 other channels competing for attention." As Alan Goodman sees it, the M, dressed in all it's costumes, "has movement even as it sits there. It already had action because something is always being done to it."

In September, Seibert took his presentation of "Music Channel," now called "MTV: Music Television," to the Warner higher-ups, including Bob Pittman, John Lack and Jack Schneider. He decided to show all the variations. "Which one are you going to use?" they asked. "All of them, and more," Seibert re-

Design by
Manhattan Design
Illustrations by
Frank Olinsky
Fabrications
and by
Broadcast Arts,
Washington DC
Buzzco, NYC and
Colossal Pictures
San Francisco

plied. It was a decision he didn't make lightly.

"Everyone said we must be nuts," Seibert recalls, although he's quick to add that most approved the basic MTV look. [This was the politic answer at the time, but read the true story here.] In fact, Seibert frankly admits that the man with the most reservations about letting the logo continually change was himself. "The idea went against everything I've ever known. For weeks after, I kept muttering 'should it change?' 'Shouldn't it?' But my gut feeling was to make it move."

Seibert's judgement paid off. The MTV: Music Television logo and on-air look has been nominated by both the Clio Awards and the New York Art Director's Club for design excellence. (In December 2981, MTV was named one of the "Products of the Year" by Fortune Magazine). Actually, the logo and on-air look have taken on a look of its own. Viewers routinely send in their versions of MTV, including elaborate renditions on their envelopes.

The print and on-air MTV spots are a collaboration. They are all produced in-house by Goodman, while the animation is done on the

outside, most often by Buzz Potamkin's [Buzzco] company or Drew Takahashi and Gary Gutierrez of Colossal Pictures in San Francisco. Potamkin is responsible for "Logo on the Moon," which has become MTV's top-of-the-hour signature ID. It's an animated montage of NASA's first lunar landing with a rapidly changing MTV logo in place of the United States flag the astronauts staked to the moon's surface. Potamkin calls it "the iconographic message of our age."

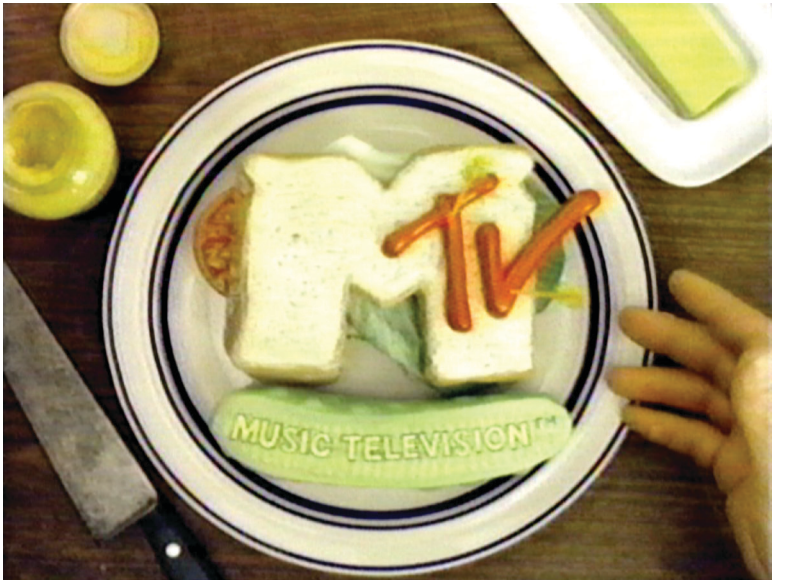
Colossal is responsible for many of the daring mini-stories, like "Raiders of the Lost M," the channel identification that begins with a race through an Egyptian temple with several dramatic exploits occurring before the treasured MTV is found; "M-Factory," an assembly line spot with massive iron Ms being forged into being; and MT Rooms" which takes place in a desolate motel. A set of falling televisions beaming the MTV logo is called "Network" while the silvery, foil-like M is called simply "Electric Wet."

One on-air promo is the result of a joke. Designers at Colossal were working overtime trying to come up with a new MTV twist and were getting nowhere. Strictly in a fun, and clearly after heaps of cold burgers and cokes had been consumed, the animators created a gag promo which shows

the MTV logo being created of twisted french fries and flying ketchup. It was sent to Seibert and Goodman who put it on the air, as is. Perhaps spurred by such zany creations, Seibert says a new animation in the works has the logo formed out of slices of ham, cheese, bacon and lettuce. It's called "Club M." (Also in keeping with MTV's outrageous touch is its new print ad campaign devised by LPG/Pon which champions the MTV viewers as "cable brats."

The decision to continue such variations breaks every design maxim known, althought MTV's highly-defined audience helps. "Since the company has fairly homogenous listeners," Drew Takahashi of Colossal Pictures commented, "it allowed us to do things that would offend other kinds of sensibilities. And we had complaints about how MTV looked. "There's no escaping the fact that it's both bold and ugly. But you've got to call attention to the fact that you're watching MTV."

"M-Fries"
Colossal Pictures
San Francisco
1981



"Club M"
Broadcast Arts
Washington D.C.
1982

The ‘M’ was the star

In a world about to explode with
TV channels and noise, it had to be.

By Fred Seibert

The mission wasn’t clear to me at the start. When I suggested we take the most famous television event in history –the first humans walking on the moon in August 1969– and appropriate it with our logo, I figured we were being conceited. MTV was going to change the world, right? It wasn’t until a few months later that I saw the light.

My job at MTV: Music Television was to make the ‘M’ the star.

My boss didn’t tell me to do it. My actual job title was Vice President, Program Services. Essentially, I was the original Creative Director and a co-founder. My tasks seemed straightforward: get a logo made, establish the verbal and written vocabulary, and make on-air promotional spots.

Check. Check. Check.

Why did I reject nearly 500 preliminary logo sketches from Manhattan Design? Why did I pick the one you all remember? Why was it so damn

important?

Let's rewind. In 1981, the year we launched, the average American home had two television channels. In major cities like Los Angeles or New York, you'd get seven primary VHS channels: three national networks and four independents. Most people ignored UHF. In some rural areas or densely packed cities, they had one channel, with reception that was snowy at best. On average, two channels. With satellite-distributed cable TV coming fast, the prediction was there would be 100 channels by 1984. One hundred!? Unthinkable. (No one could imagine the 50 million+ YouTube channels we have today.)

In that coming flood of video programming MTV wouldn't even get sampled unless we stood out. I felt we needed a dominant visual signpost to guide viewers to us. The musicians were important, but they'd come and go. Duran Duran and Pat Benatar might be huge now, soon they'd be replaced by Michael Jackson, the Backstreet Boys or Nirvana. The channel itself had to be the constant, it had to outlast the artists.

To me, it was like the transformation in the '60s when album covers went from utilitarian objects to statements. Music alone wasn't enough, the design, photography, and illustration had to stop

you in your tracks. Bob Pittman, my boss, put it perfectly:

"Fred, people don't buy music. They buy packages."

The Beatles may have lit the match, then the fire spread fast, and I wanted MTV to burn just as brightly.

Columbia Records 1948

Parlophone Records 1967

What to do?

After hundreds of failed attempts, Manhattan Design walked in with that now-iconic giant 'M' with a graffiti-inspired 'TV' scrawled over it.

Yes!

My promo mentor, Dale Pon, had a mantra he

MTV:
Music Television
1981-2010

shared: “Designs need to dominate the space.” Their ‘M’ did that. It filled every inch of those old 4x3 TV screens like it owned the room.

From there, my creative partner Alan Goodman and I reached out to young, independent animators around the world. They’d grown up not just with rock’n’roll, with the album art that gave the music its emotional proof. We gave the filmmakers a simple rule: Make sure the ‘M’ is the center of attention.

They delivered. Did they ever.

MTV: Music Television bombarded the world with Culture Club, A Flock of Seagulls, The Human League, Michael Jackson, Joan Jett, David Bowie, Snoop Doggy Dogg, Aerosmith, Radiohead, Counting Crows, Sheryl Crow, NSYNC, Britney Spears, Eminem, Linkin Park, Blink-182, Mandy Moore...

Many of those artists are now forgotten, dismissed, or listened to only through the fog of nostalgia. And once MTV dropped “Music Television” for "Jersey Shore," and "Ridiculousness" with a gutted version of the logo, something got lost. Even they know it. Visit the MTV Store today... the only T-shirts that sell carry the classic logos designed by Pat Gorman, Frank Olinsky, and Patti Rogoff of

Manhattan Design.

The singers and the groups came and went.
MTV: Music Television?

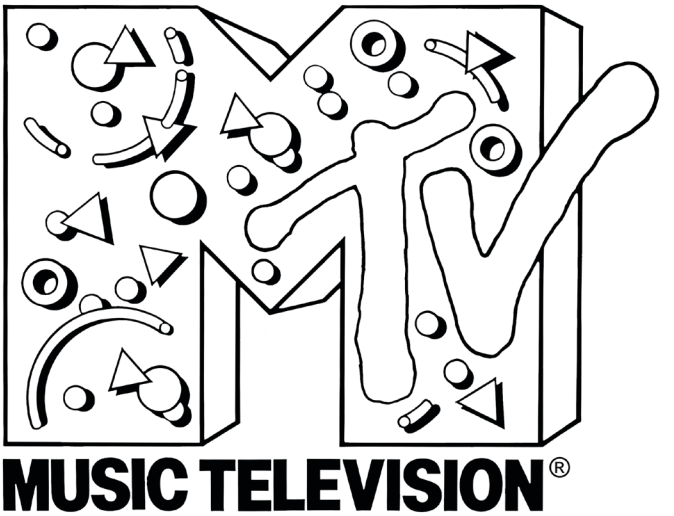
MTV hit the world with more glorious M's than you could shake a stick at.

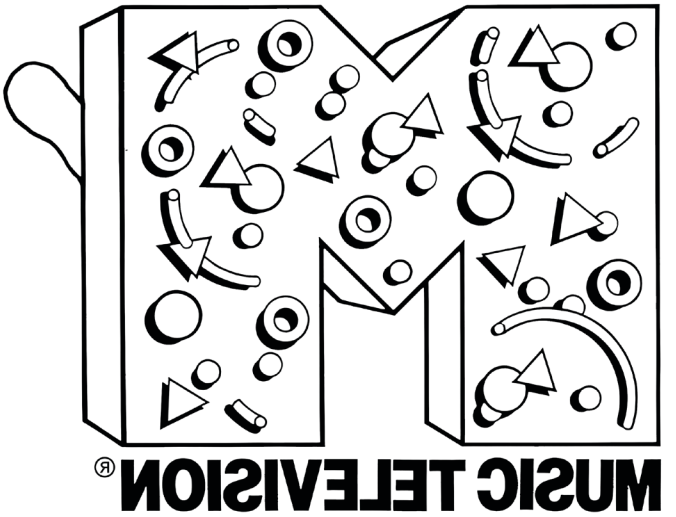
...

Note: The majority of the logo designs on the following pages are from the earliest years of MTV: Music Television. There are some variations in color and quality, depending on the source material, much of it having been animated, filmed and transfered to low resolution, "standard definition" video; most of the original artwork or photography used to produce them no longer exists. –FS

MUSIC TELEVISION®

MUSIC TELEVISION®


MUSIC TELEVISION®

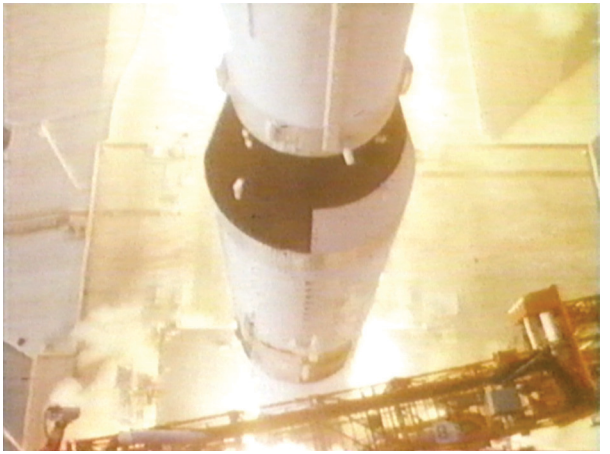

®NOISIVELET CISUM

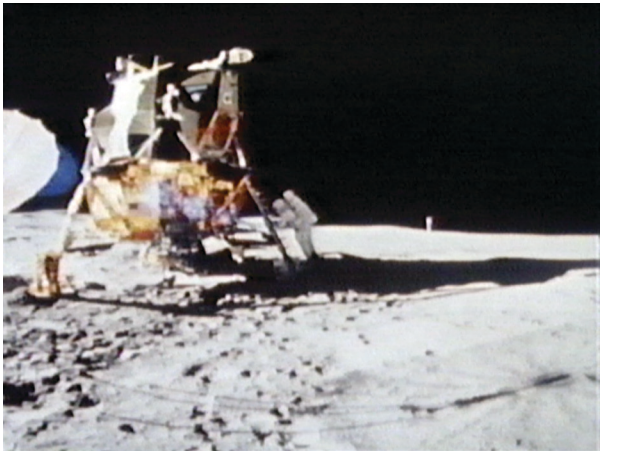
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

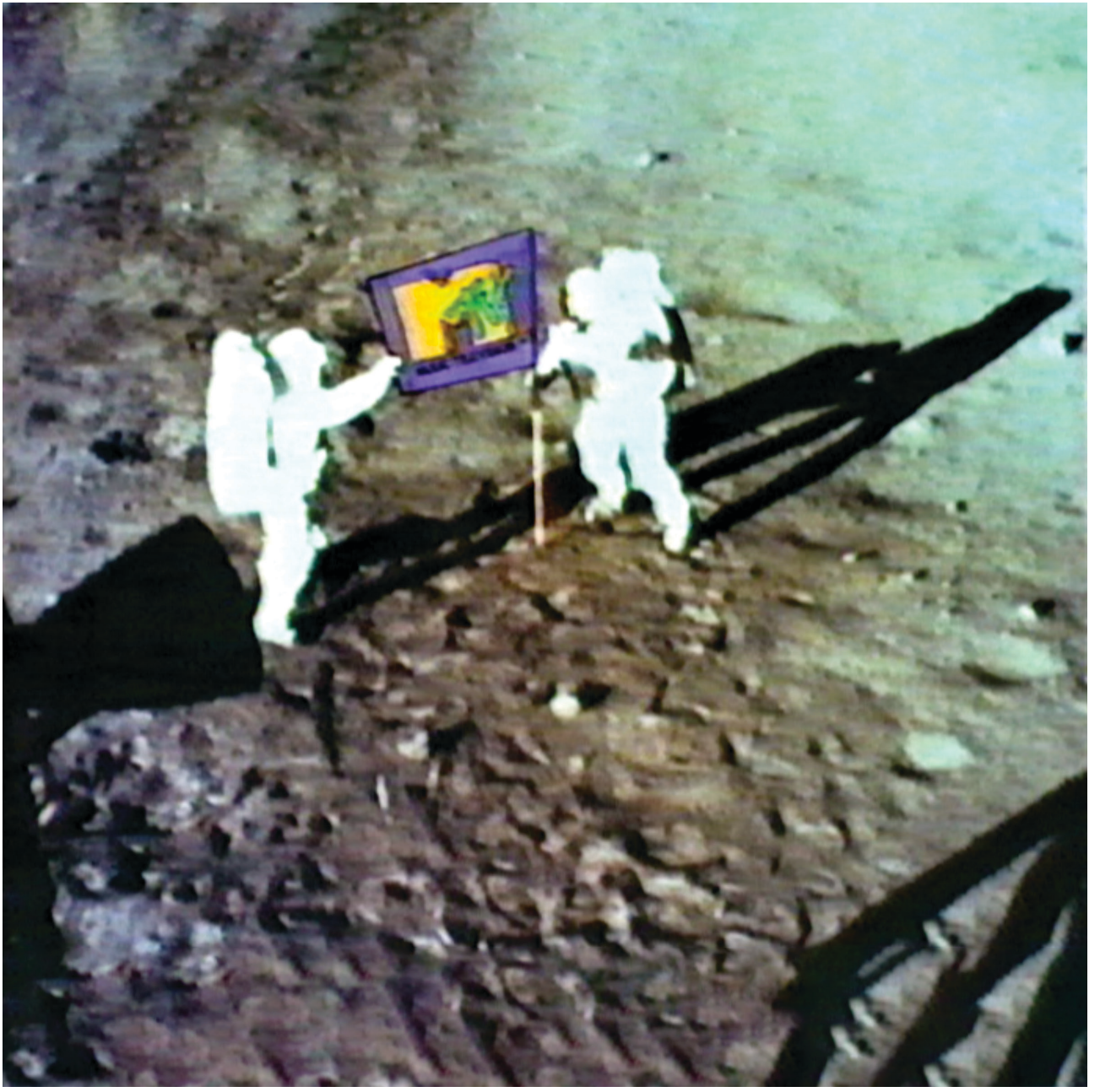
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

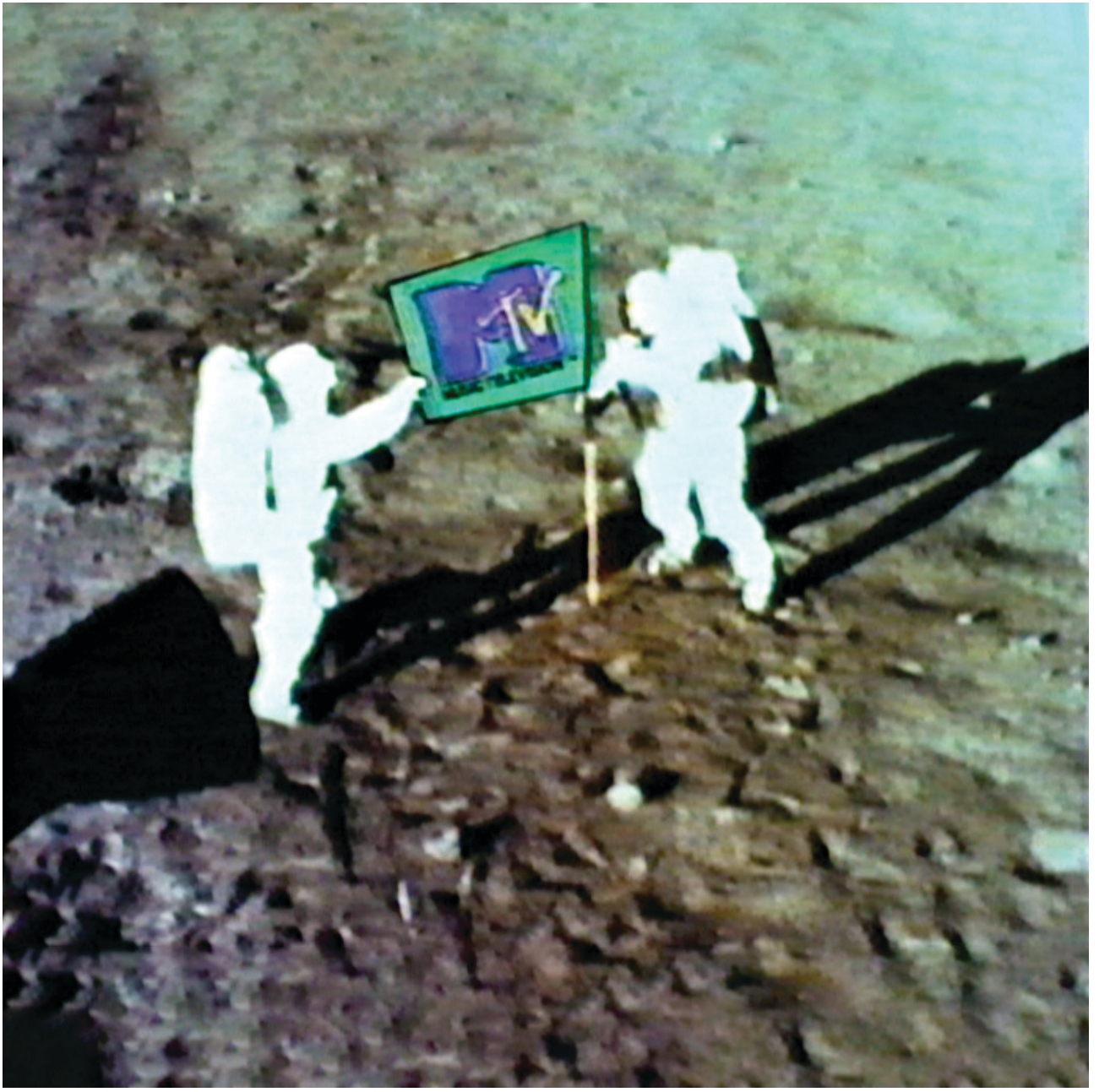
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

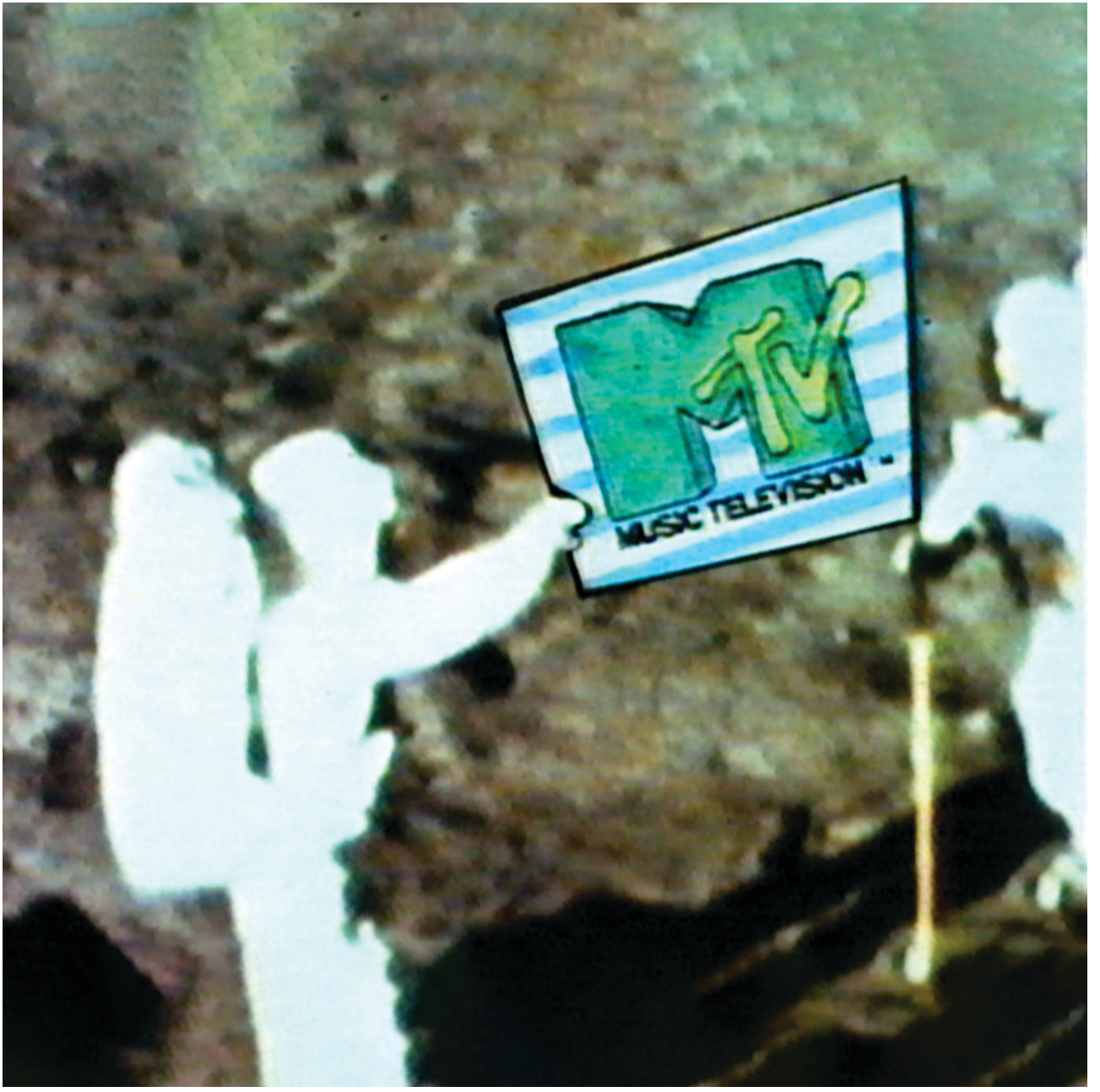
MUSIC TELE VISION™

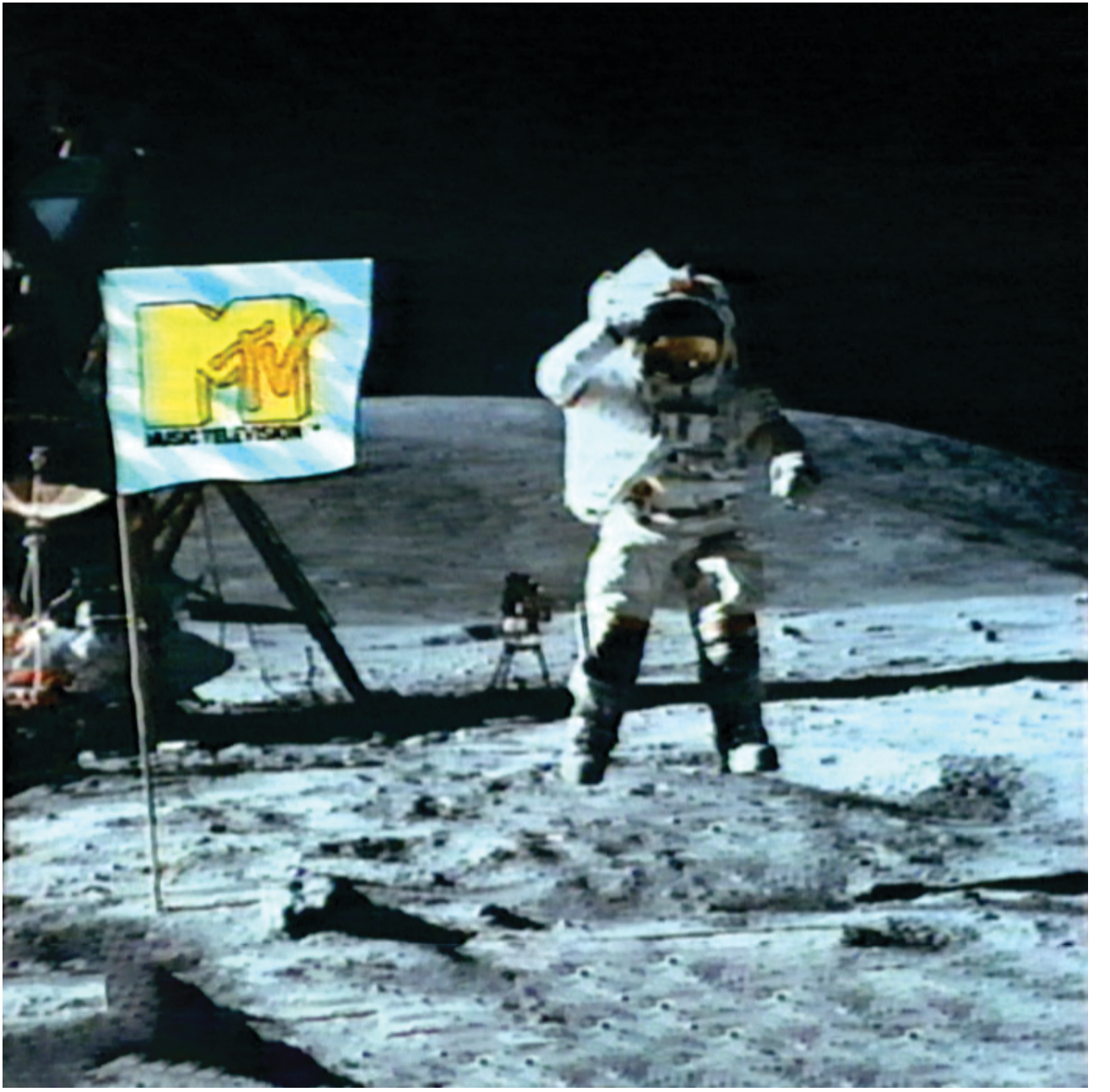




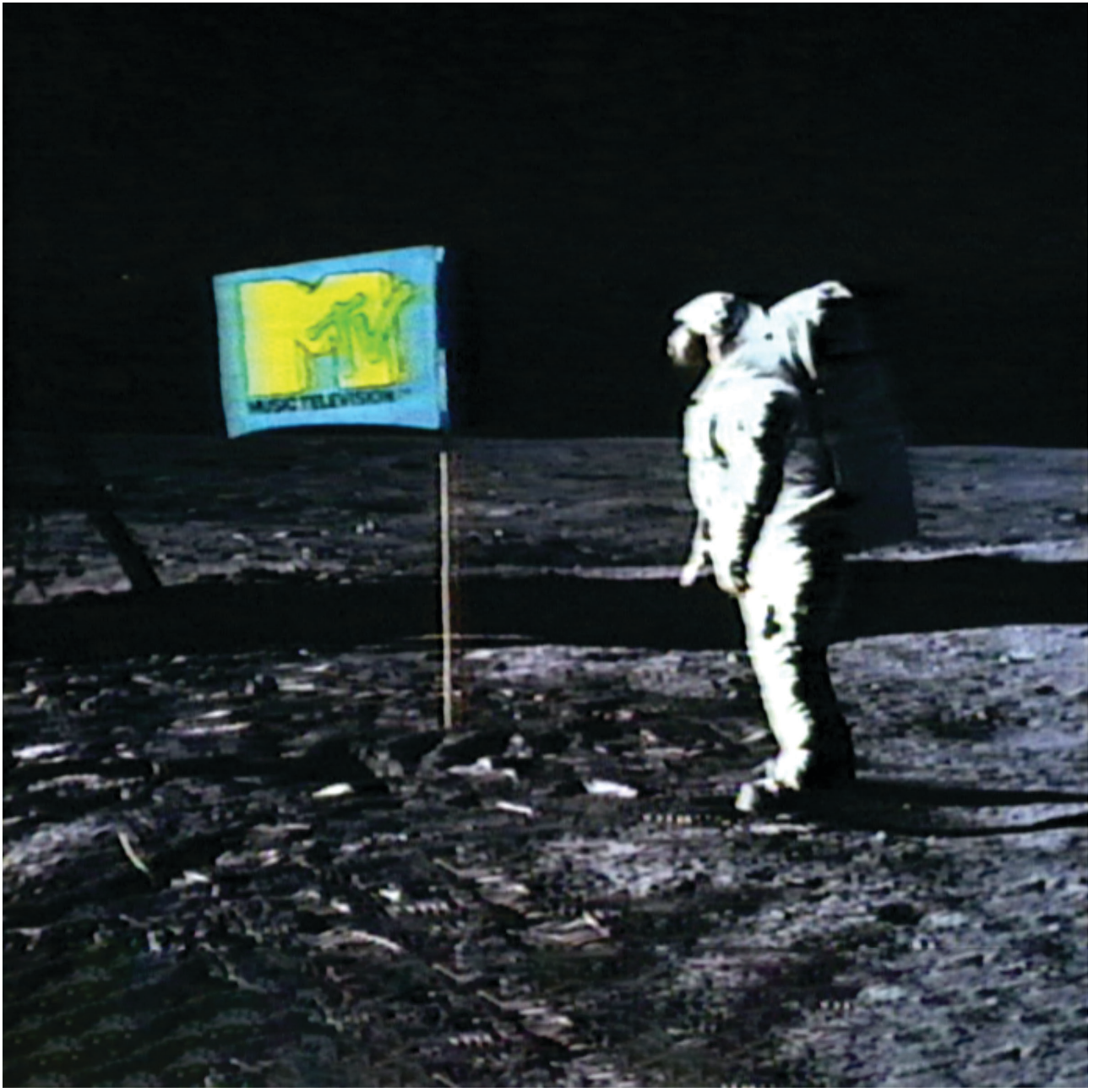



MTV

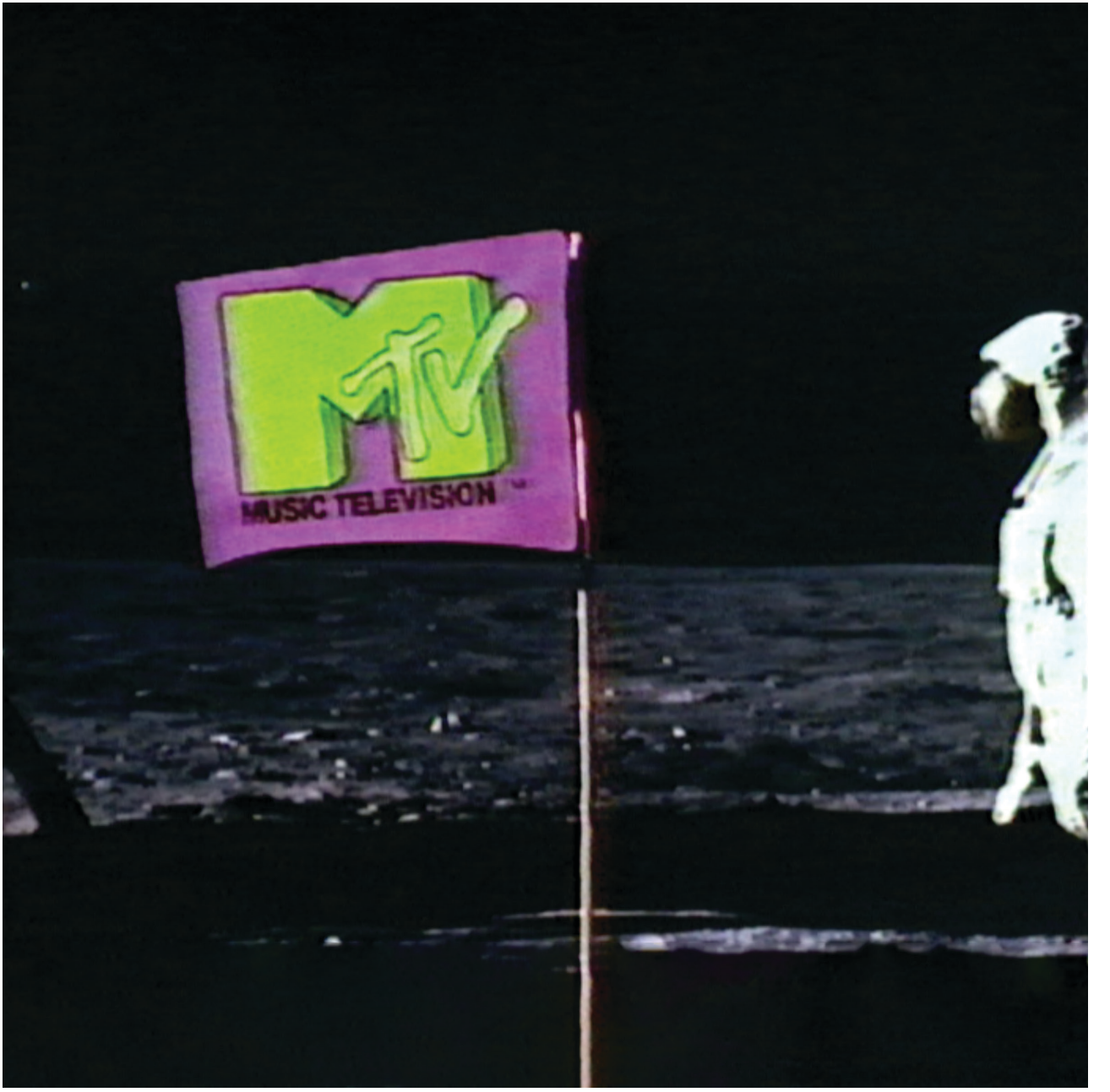

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION


MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™


MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION


MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

SPORTAGE
On Cable. In Stereo.
MTV
MUSIC
TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION
You'll Never Look At Music
The Same Way Again.

You'll Never
Look At Music
The Same
Way Again.

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

Happy Birthday
MTV

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

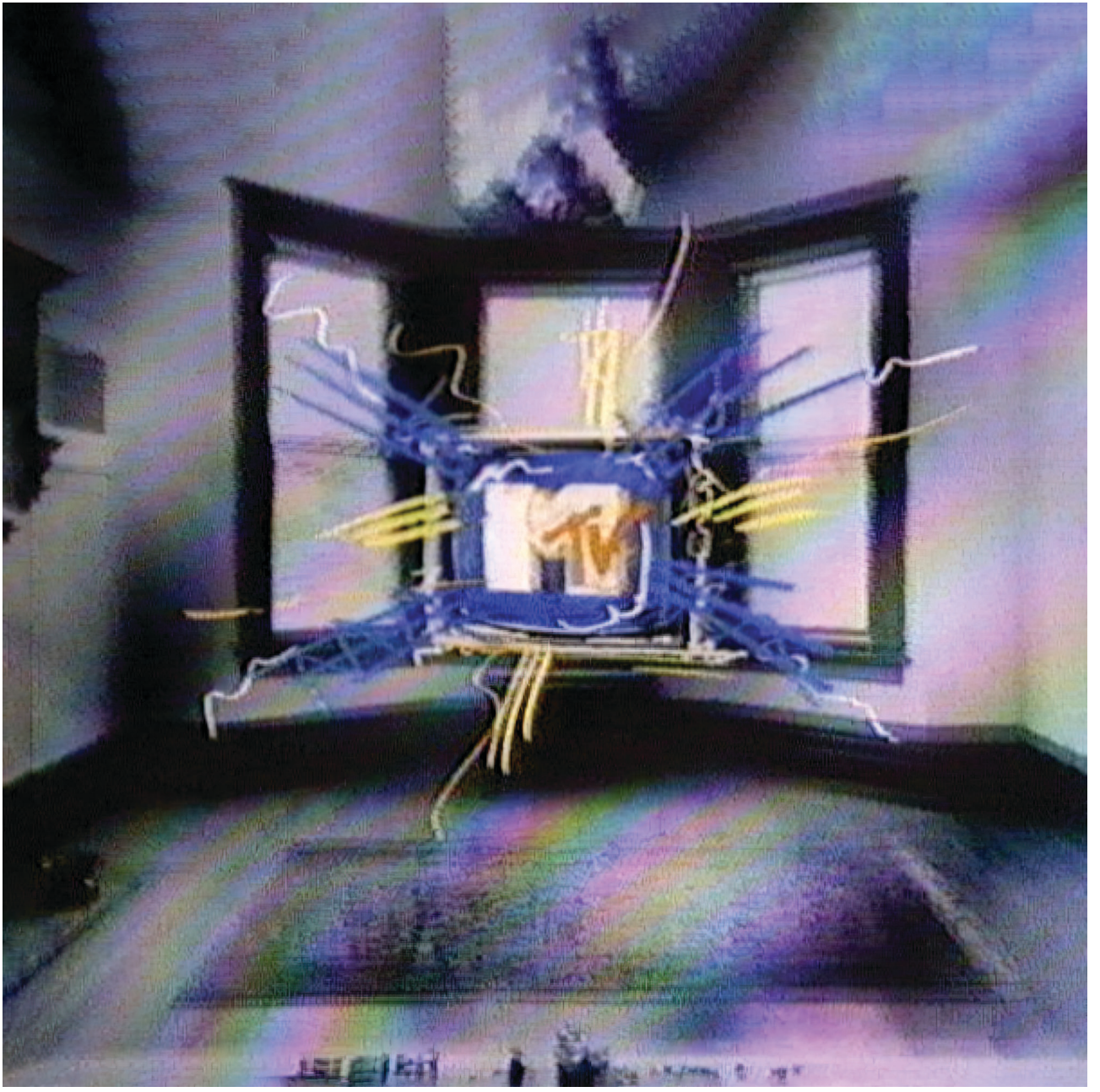
I'm a Cable Brat
MUSIC TELEVISION
"IT'S HOT!"
MUSIC TELEVISION
I'm a Cable Brat
MUSIC TELEVISION
MUSIC TELEVISION
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™
© 2023 Viacom International Inc. All Rights Reserved.

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

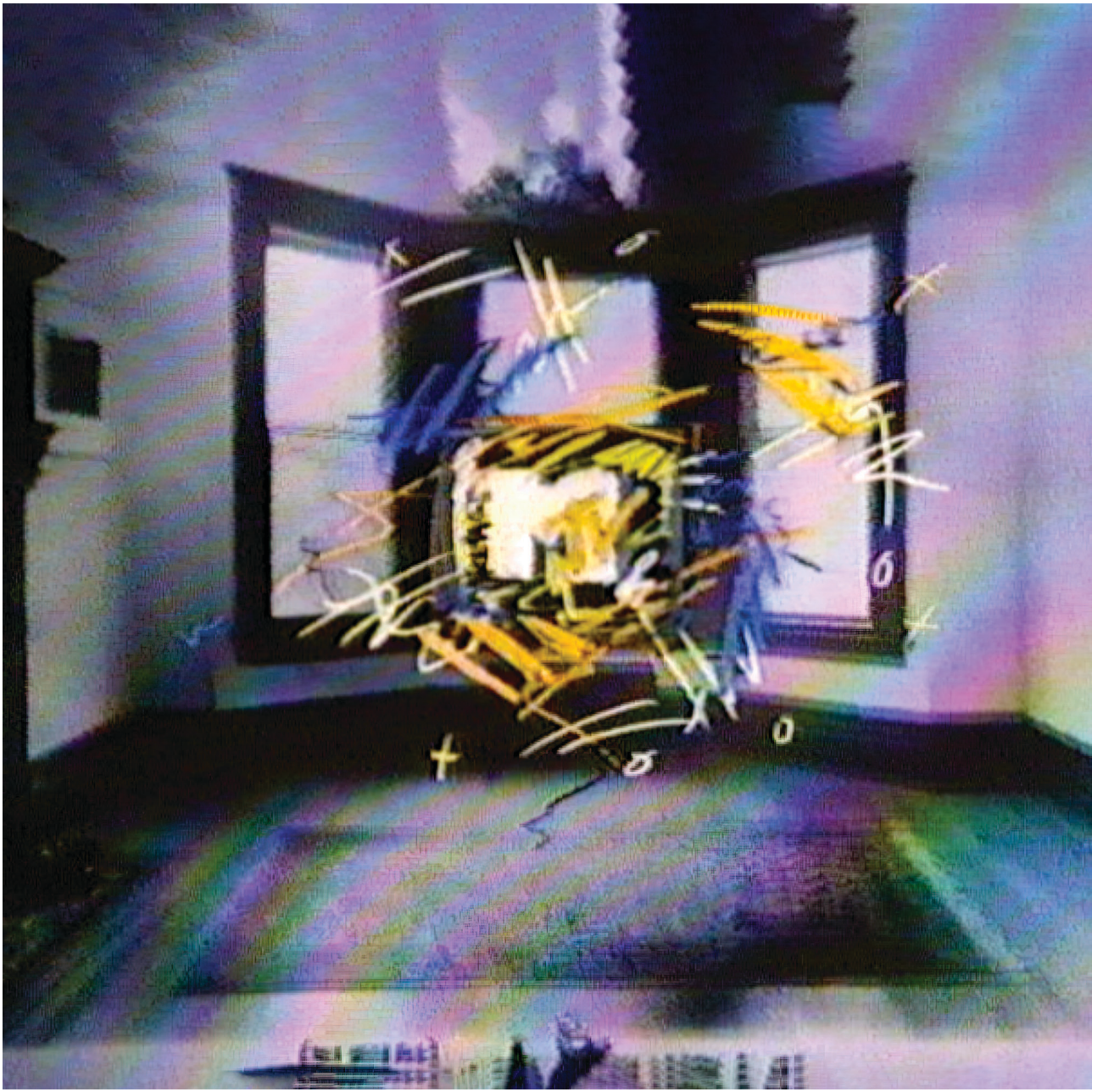
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV

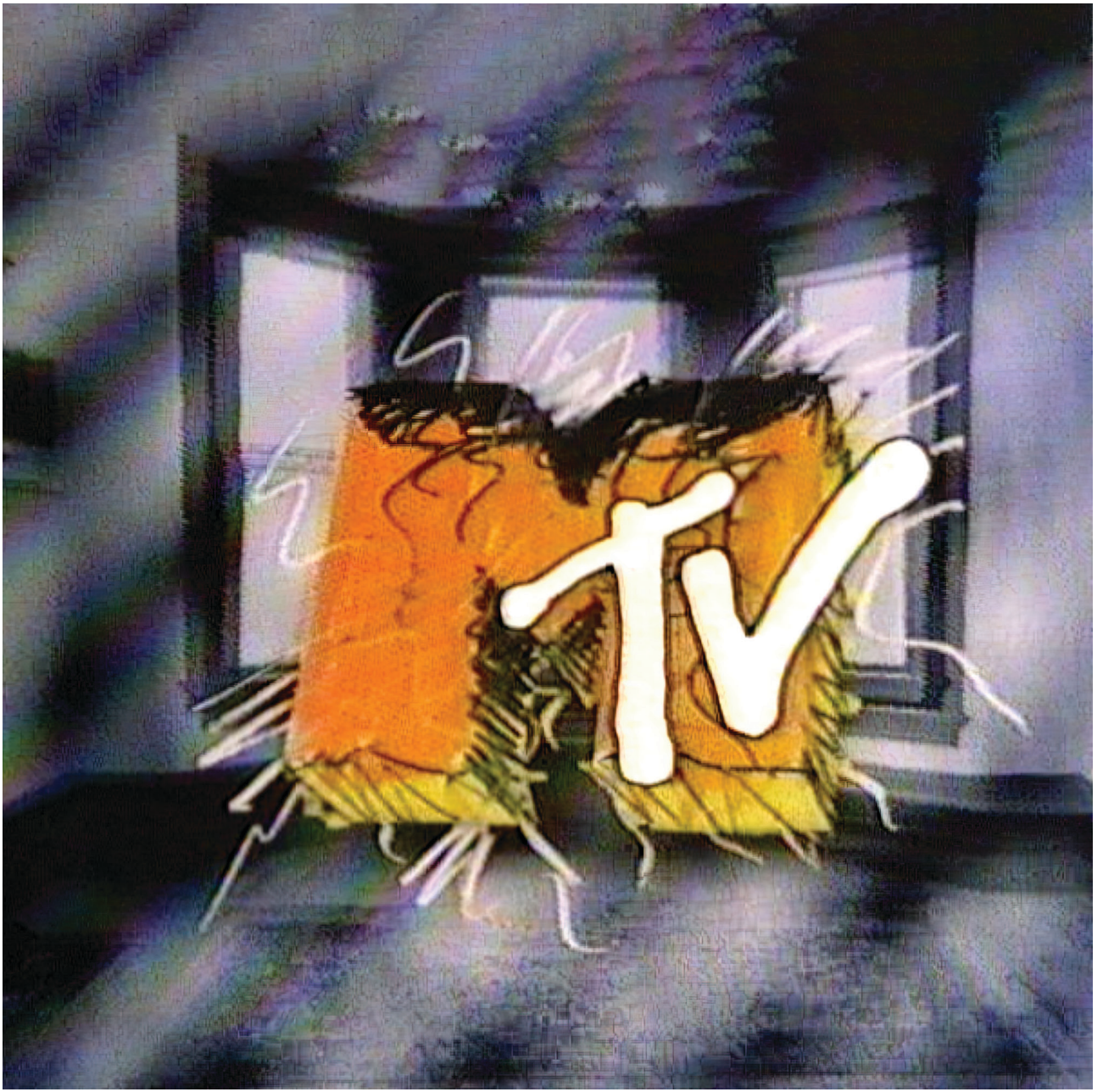

MTV

MTV

MTV



MTV


MTV

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

PEPSI
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MUSIC TELEVISION®

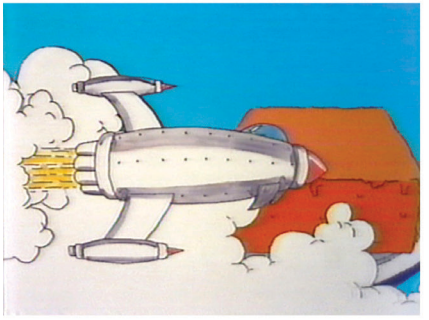
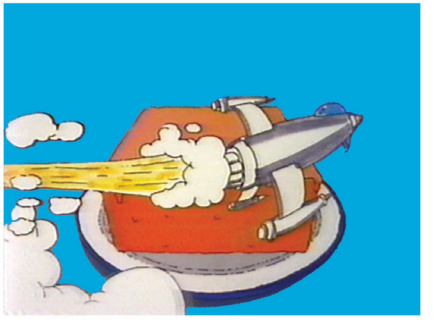
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

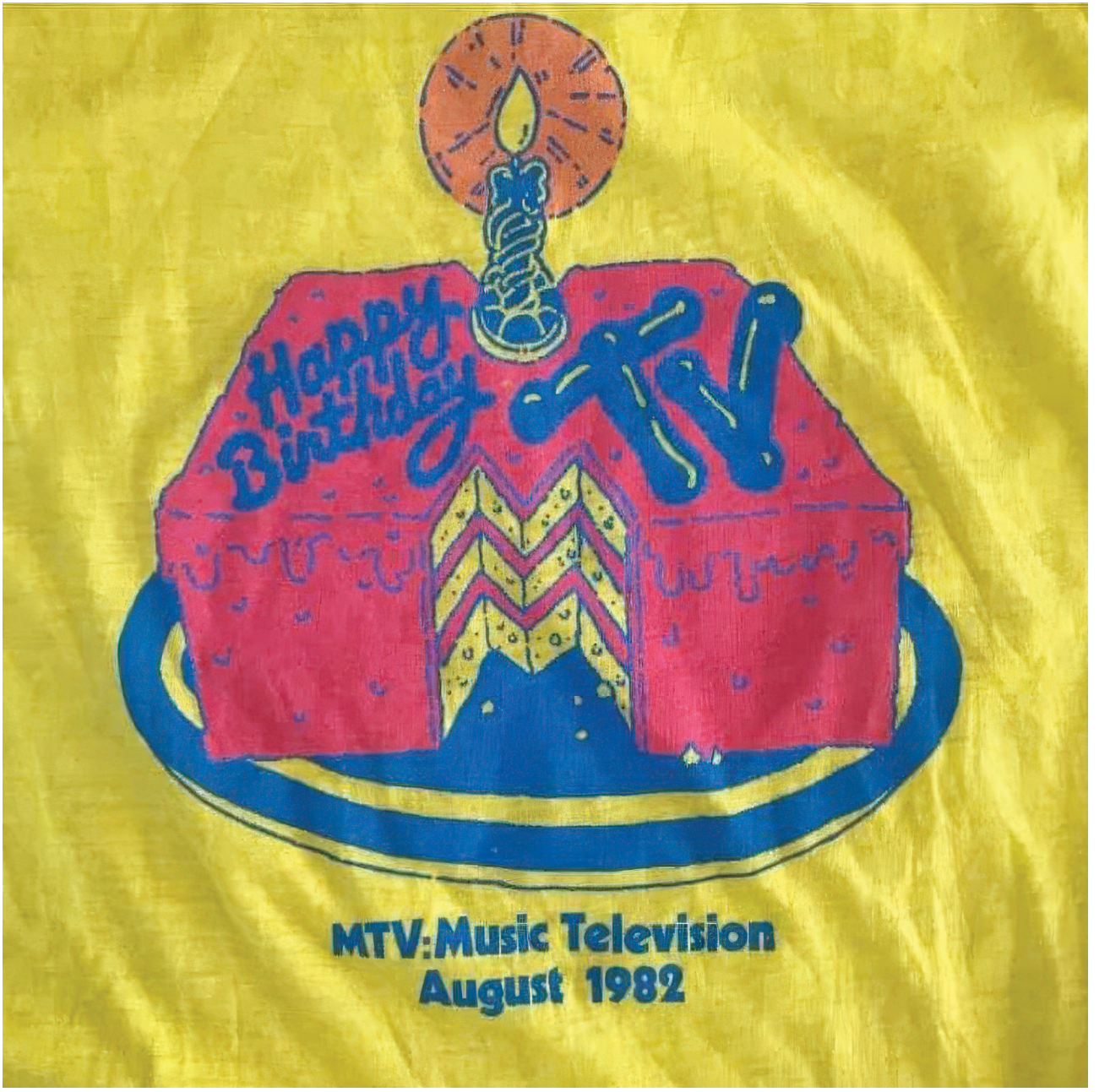
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV

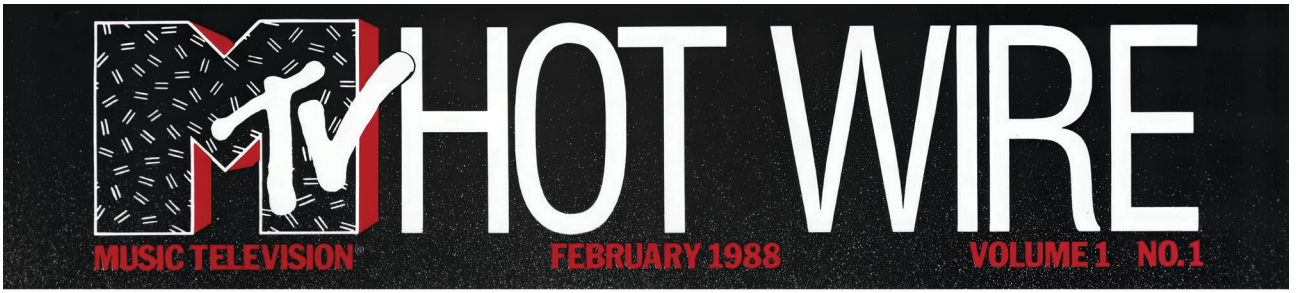



MUSIC TELEVISION

Happy Birthday
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION


Happy Birthday MTV
MTV:Music Television
August 1982

It's our birthday– and you get the goodies!
One Year Old August 1982
Thanks for making year one so wonderful!
MUSIC TELEVISION


HOT WIRE
MUSIC TELEVISION
FEBRUARY 1988
VOLUME 1 NO.1

HOT WIRE
MUSIC TELEVISION
FEBRUARY 1988
VOLUME 1 NO.1
MTV NEWS YOU CAN USE
MTV WINS AS MVP
ZANY GAME HITS MTV
MTV MAKES U.S. A MALL, MALL WORLD
© 1988 MTV Networks

MUSIC TELEVISION

MUSIC TELEVISION®

BIZ BUZZ

DECEMBER 5, 1987

VOLUME 1 NO. 1

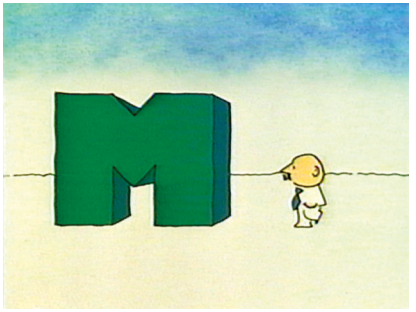
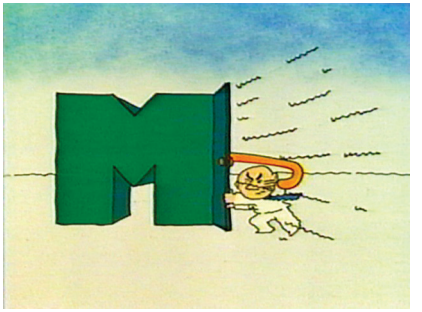
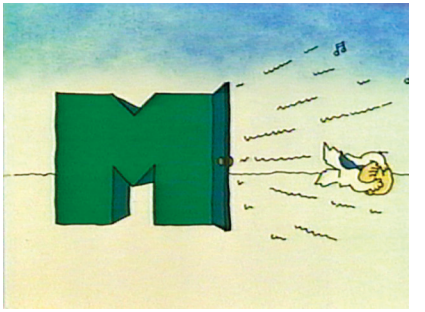
MUSIC TELEVISION®
BIZ BUZZ
MARCH 19, 1988
VOLUME 1 NO. 3

MUSIC TELEVISION®
BIZ BUZZ
MARCH 19, 1988
VOLUME 1 NO. 3
THE GREAT WHITE WAY
We all know there's no way to guarantee success of a new act. Or is there? Examine these examples of now-popular groups getting airplay on MTV": Whitesnake (Geffen), White Lion (Atlantic), Great White (Capitol). Notice a pattern here? Any day now we're expecting to hear from groups with names like "The Great White Hope" or "Whitey and the Whiteheads" or "White Christmas" or "Little White Lies" or "White Elephant" or "Tina On White."
CONGRATS HALL OF FAMERS
MTV would like to take time out from promoting ourselves to express our heartfelt congratulations to all the new inductees into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame. Congratulations to all! You finally have the recognition you deserve! And MTV was very honored to be asked to participate in this historic event by producing video segments for the ceremony. Thank you Hall of Fame for that privilege, and thanks to all the inductees who've made life in this business such a blast.
COMING SOON TO A MALL NEAR YOU!
MTV's Museum of UnNatural History" is on the road! Making good use of our country's wealth of shopping malls, this travelling show of rock 'n' roll regalia kicked off its six-month tour in Atlanta. From there to Miami, where Floridians flocked to see the "dynamic interplay between music, fashion, style, and technology." Now on to Houston, Phoenix, San Diego, Portland, Seattle and many more. We'll be working with you music biz folks to book celebrity guests to appear along the tour, both established and breaking artists. And since most malls have record stores, expect the increased traffic to beef up retail sales of the artists featured in MTV's Museum. See you at the mall!
NEW AWARD FOR RECORD RETAILERS
Receiving awards is always fun, but everyone knows : "Tis better to give than receive." This month at NARM, an award is going to Music Plus. It's our first annual "MTV Music Merchandisers Award." What is the MTV MMA? The award honors outstanding achievement by retailers in supporting MTV's efforts to help you sell records. You help us help you and you win!
Music Plus stood out as the sole record retail outlet for tickets to the 1987 MTV Video Music Awards. They included MTV in all of their local marketing efforts. They put VMA displays in 50 locations. And they co-sponsored a contest sending a winner to the VMA show. According to Music Plus, "Being the retailer for the VMA's contributed tremendously to the increased traffic that made 1987 our biggest year ever."
MUSIC TELEVISION®
© 1988 MTV Networks

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

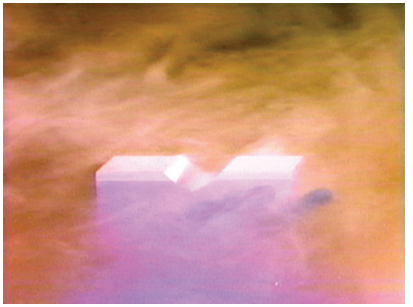
WIN
The MTV Hawaiian luau with Pat Benatar!
A postcard could do it! Watch MTV for details!
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

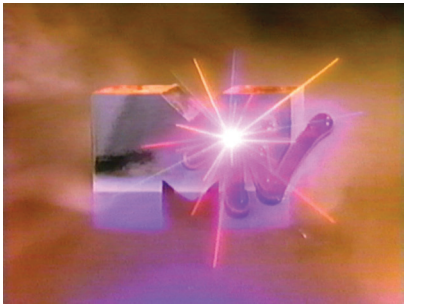
"I want my
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

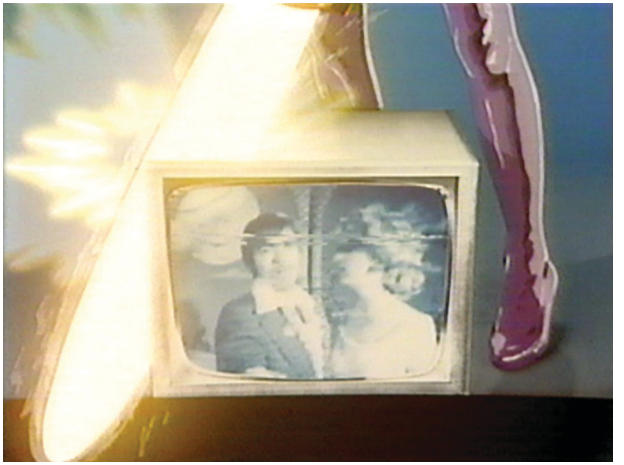
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

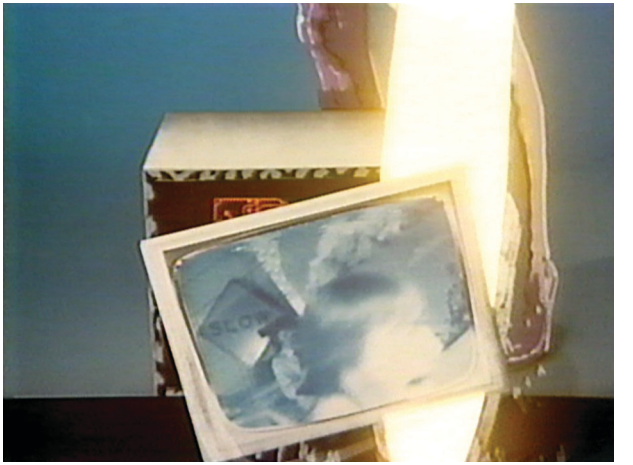
MTV

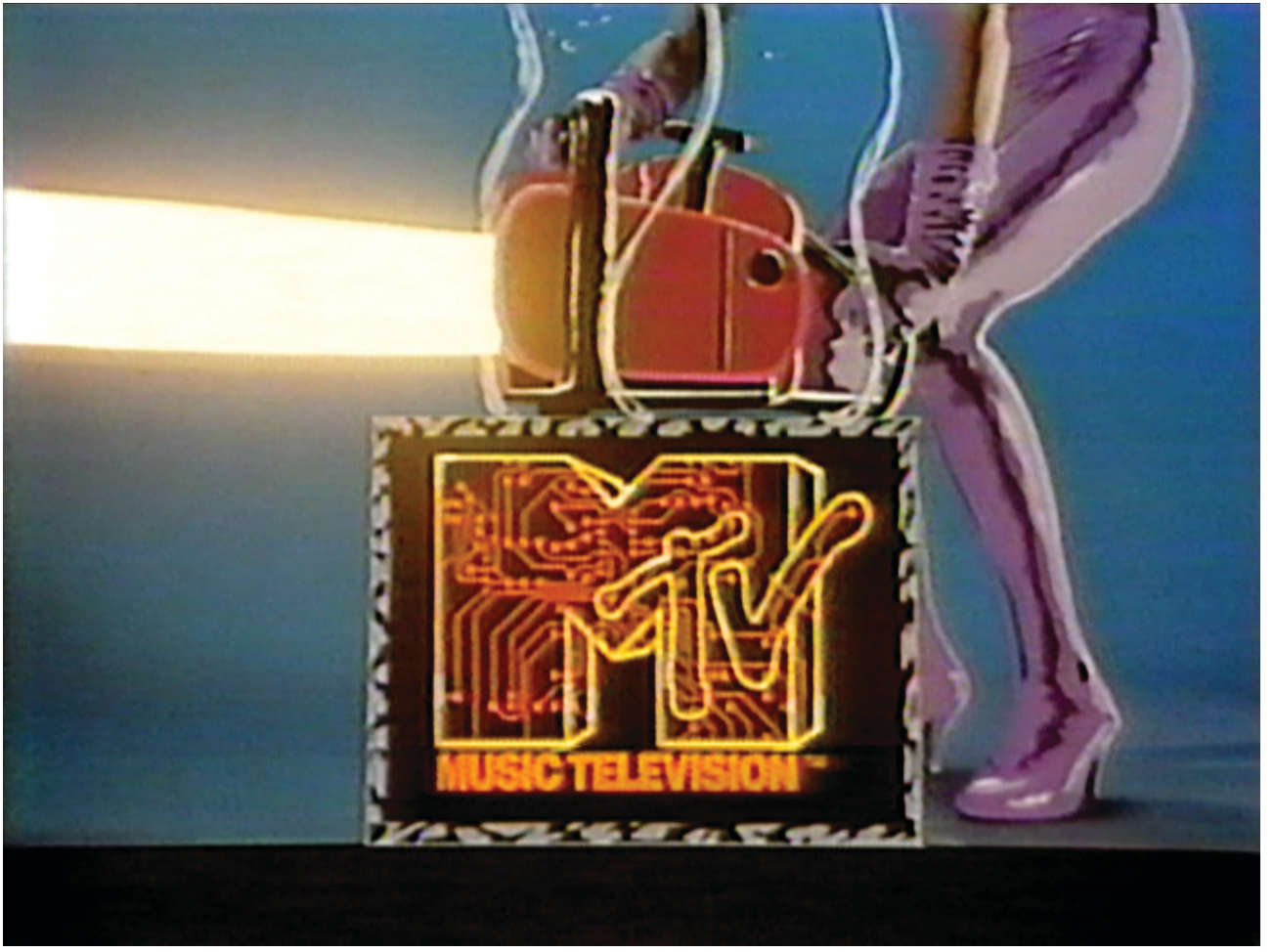


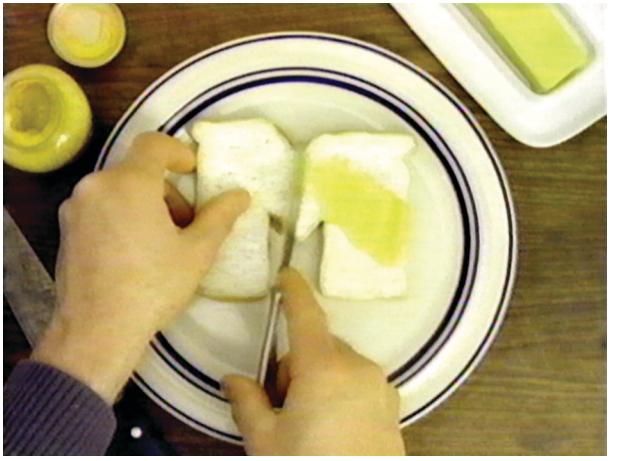
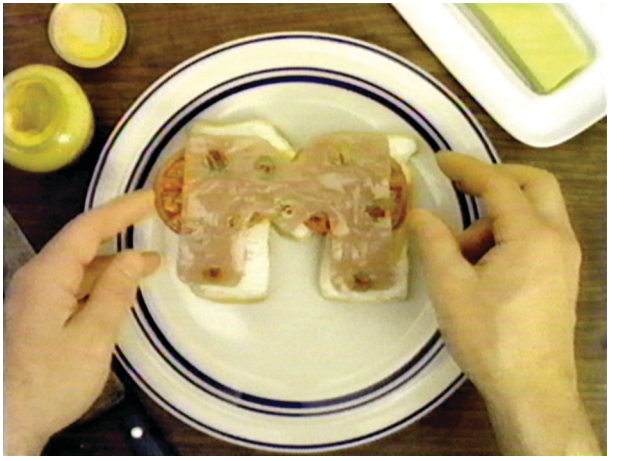


MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™






MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

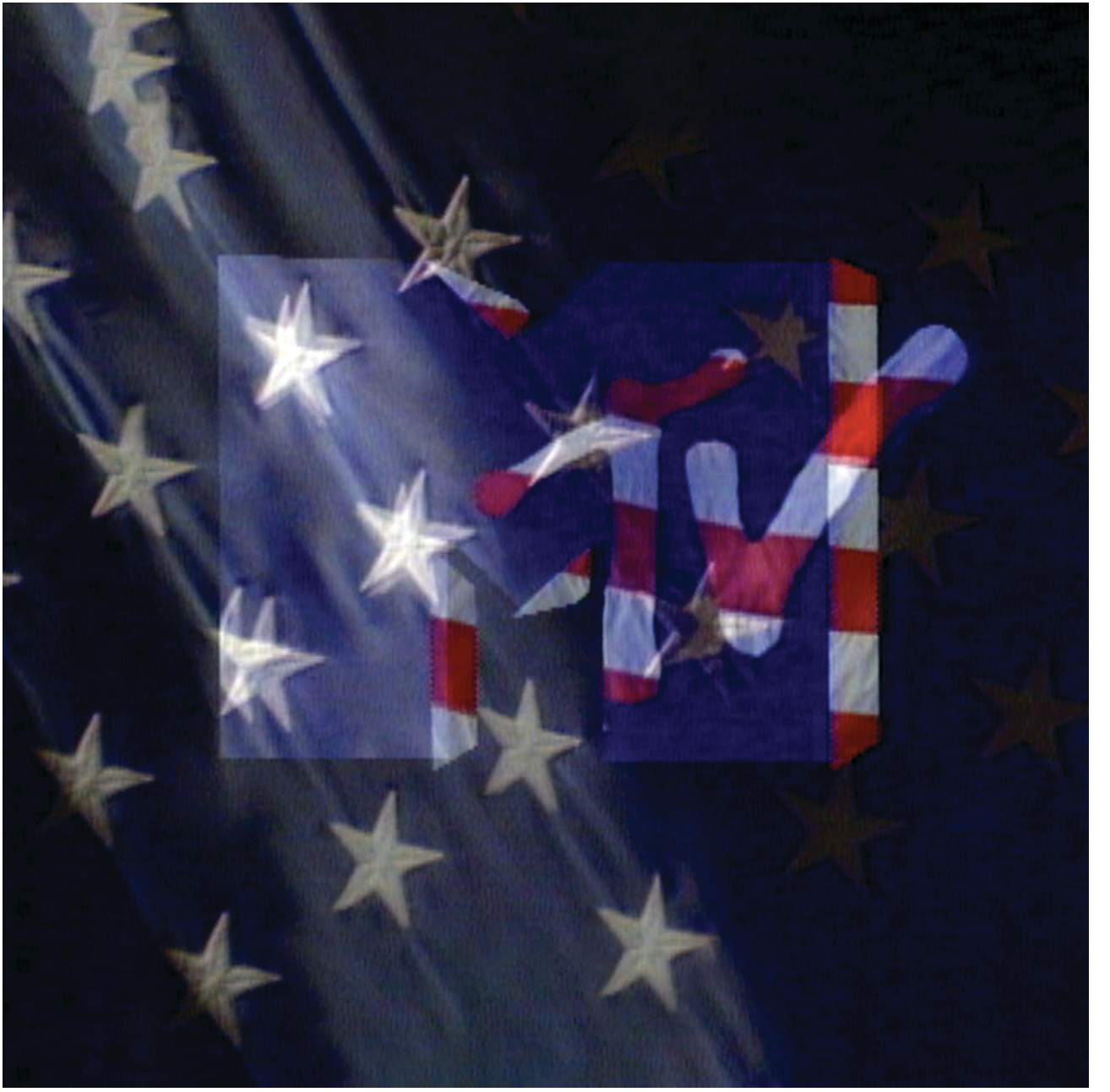
MTV

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MUSIC TELEVISION™

MUSIC TELEVISION™

MUSIC TELEVISION



MTV
SUNDAY
SPECIAL

MUSIC TELEVISION®
MUSIC TELEVISION®
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

NO VACANCY

NO POOL

NO KITCHENETTES

NO PHONES

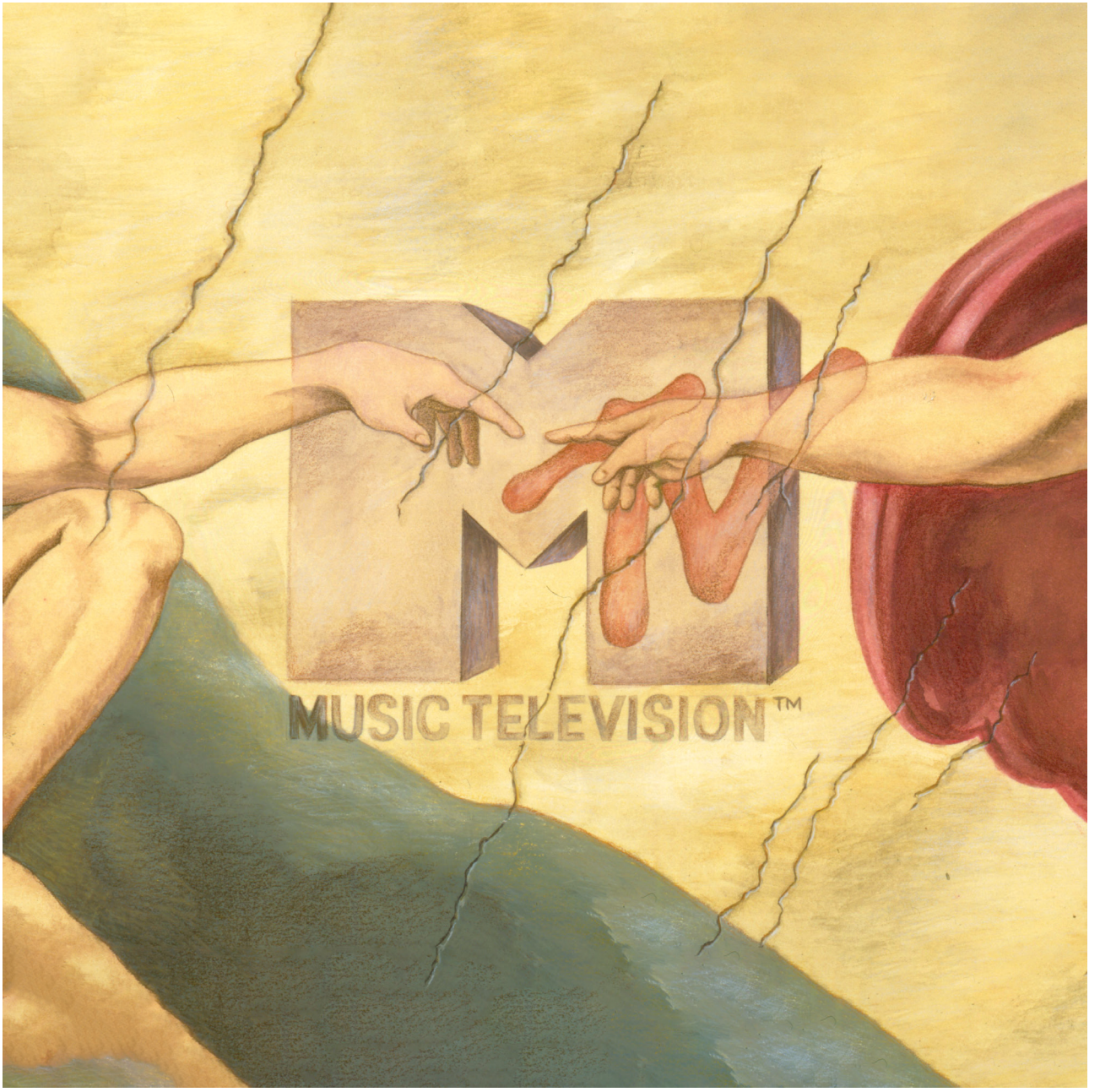
NO ESCAPE

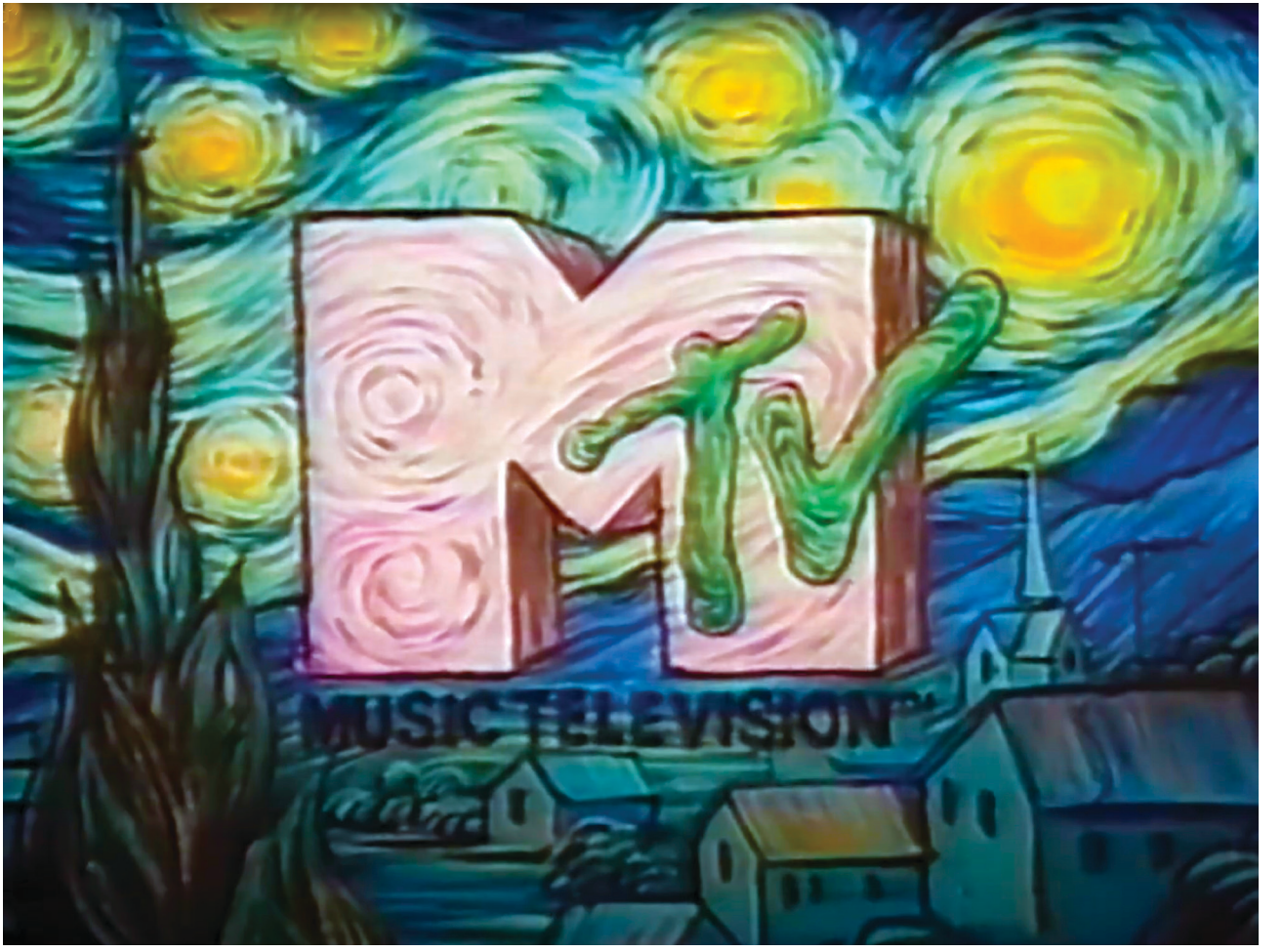
MUSIC TELEVISION™

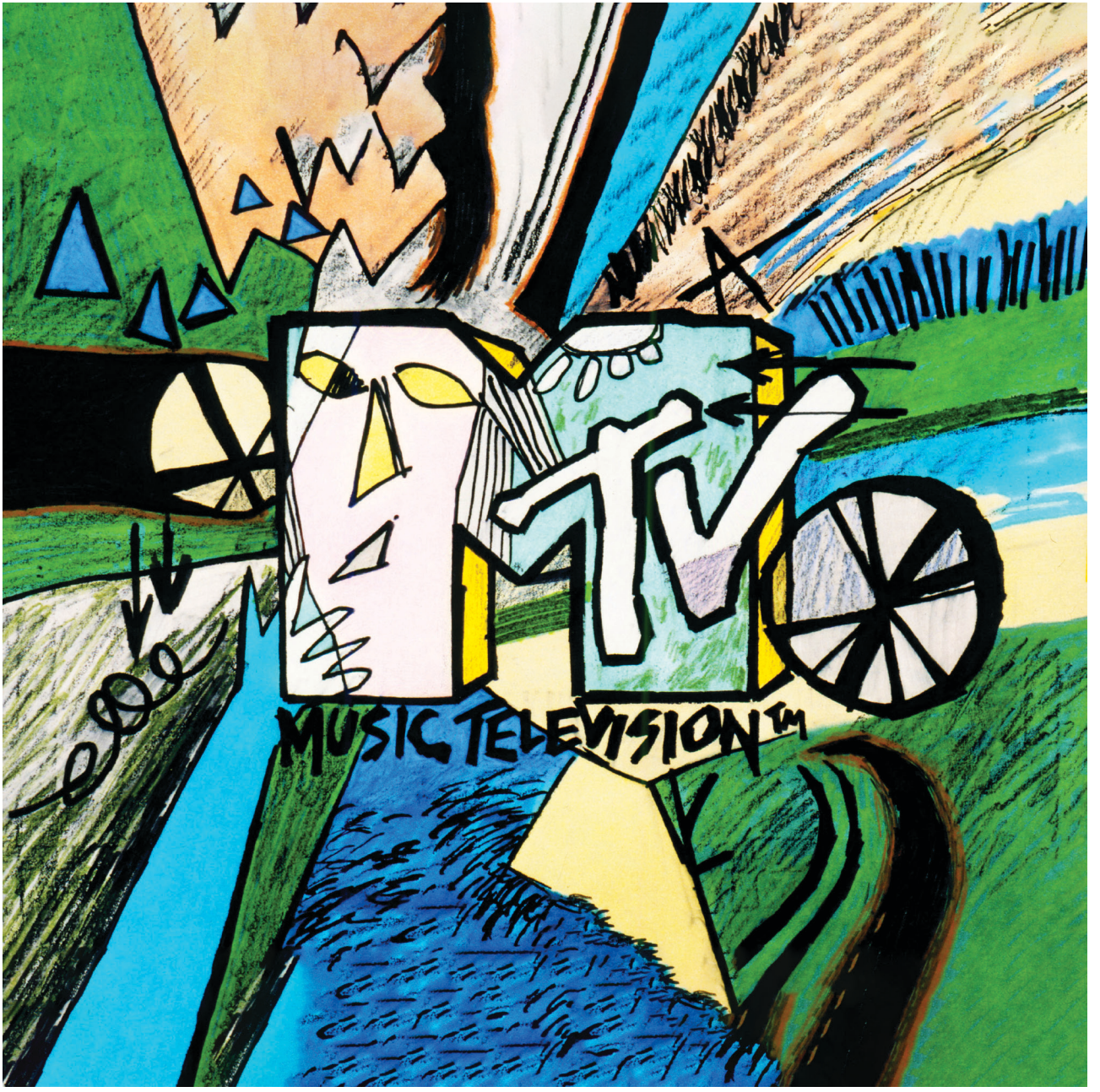
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MUSIC TELEVISION

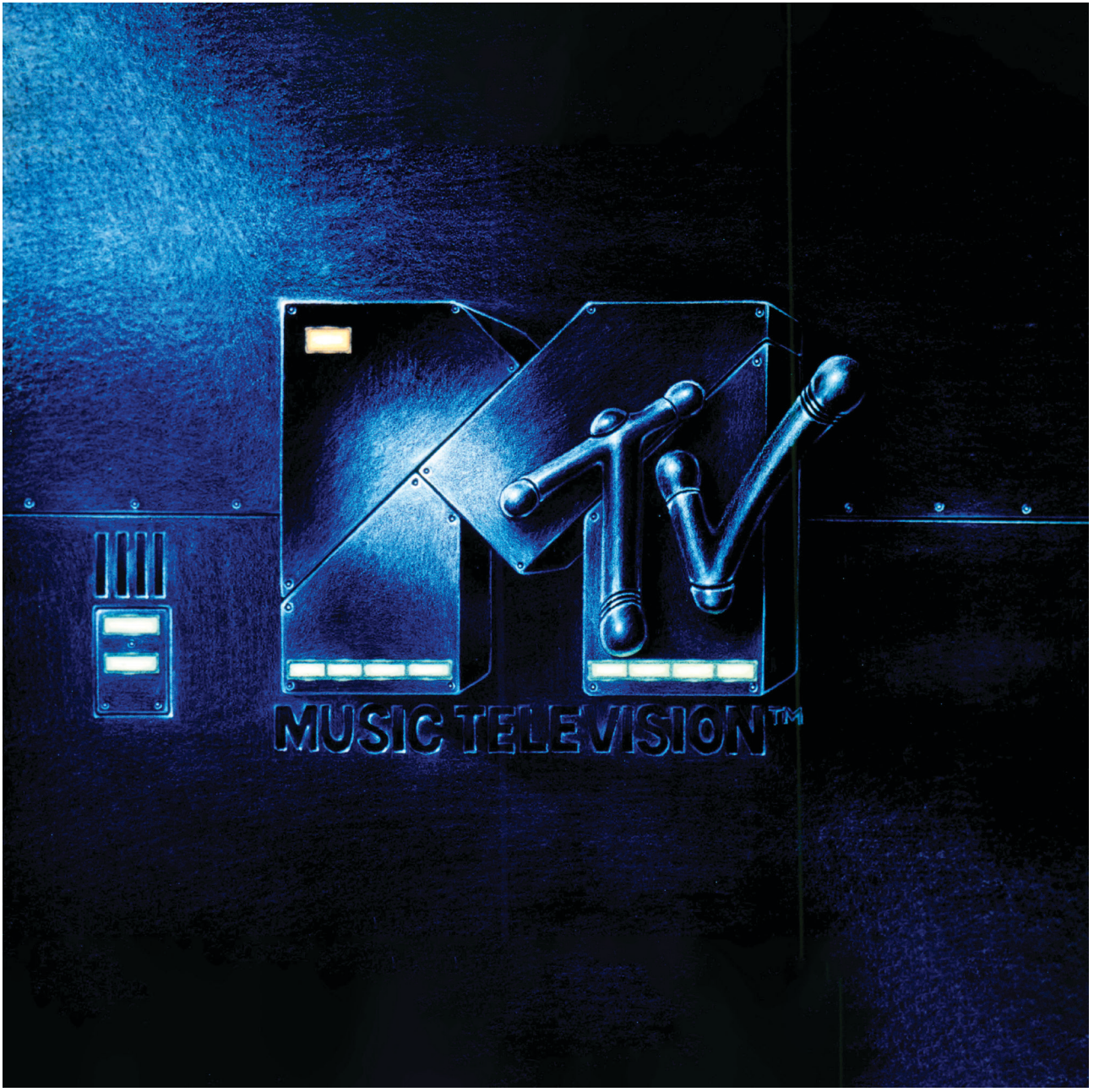

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™


MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

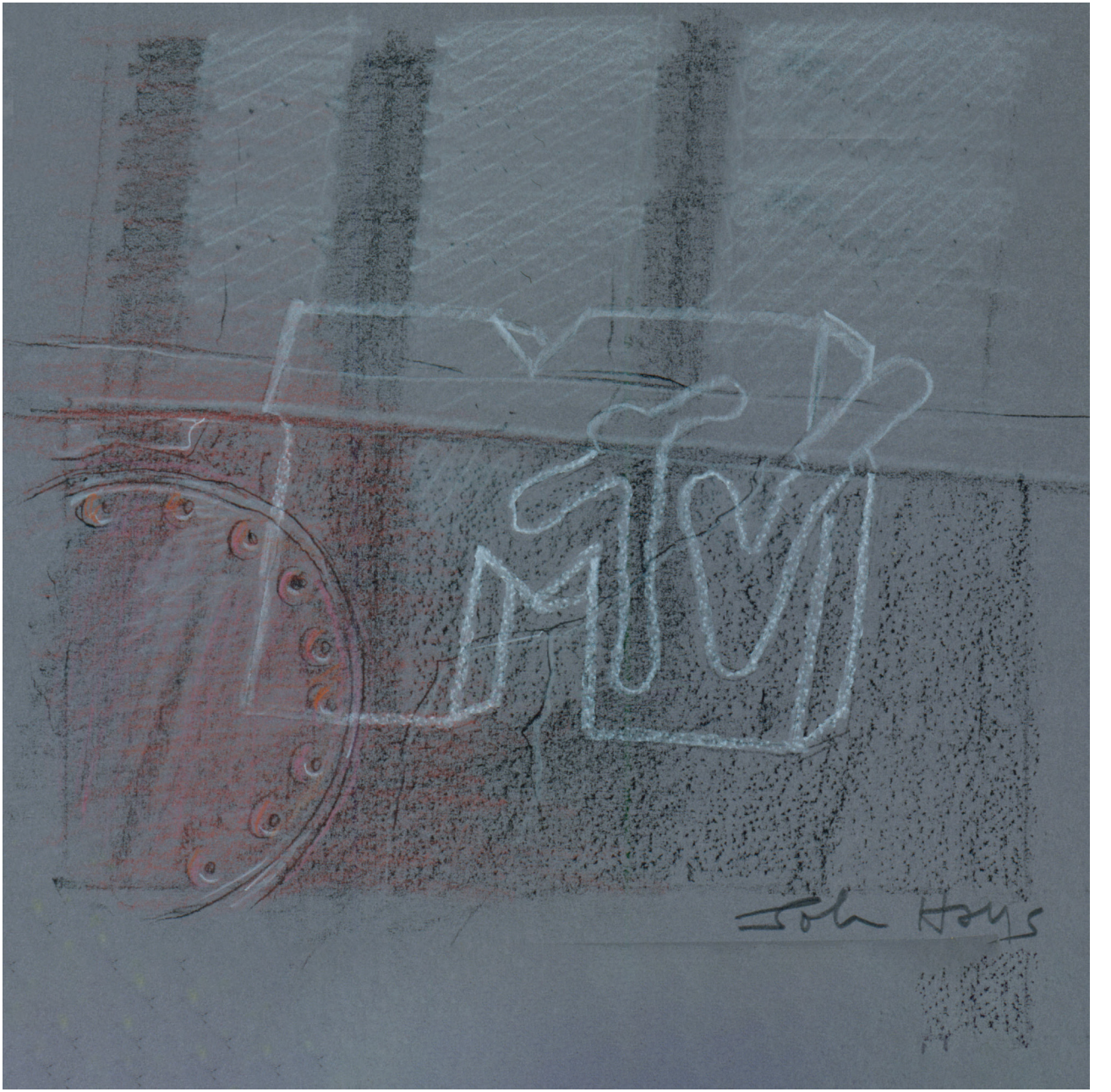

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MUSIC TELEVISION™

music
Television
TM
16oz.


MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

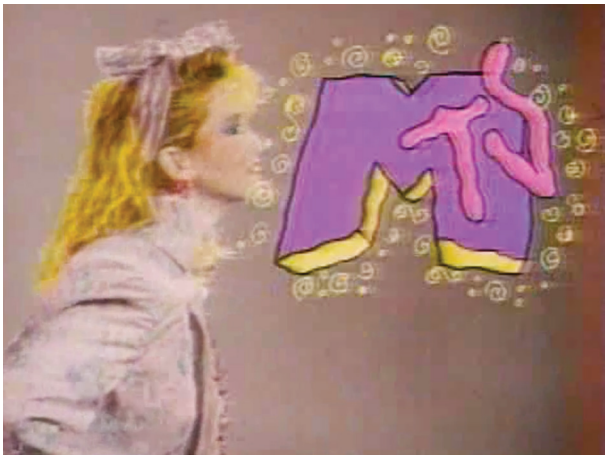

MTV
John Hays

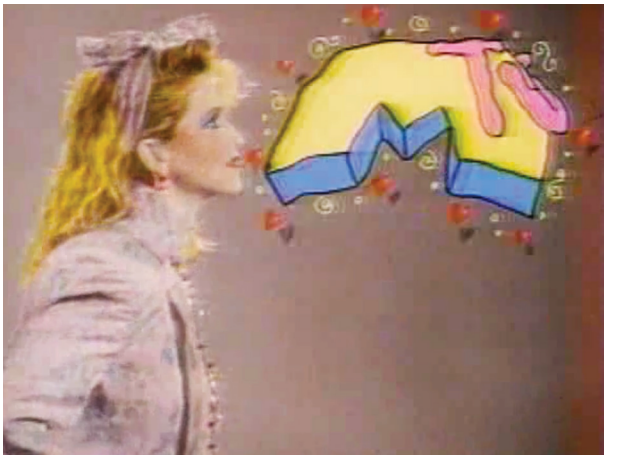
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV

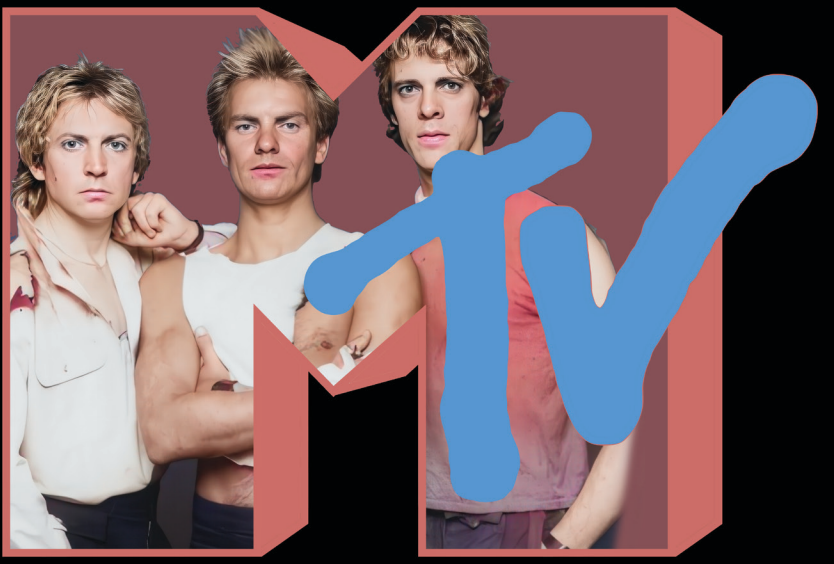




MTV
MTV
MUSIC TELEVIS

MTV

MTV


MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
EVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MUSIC TE ON

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™
BRISCO

MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

TELEVISION™

MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

YOU AND ME AND
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MUSIC TELEVISION

MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

CLUB MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
CANDY
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

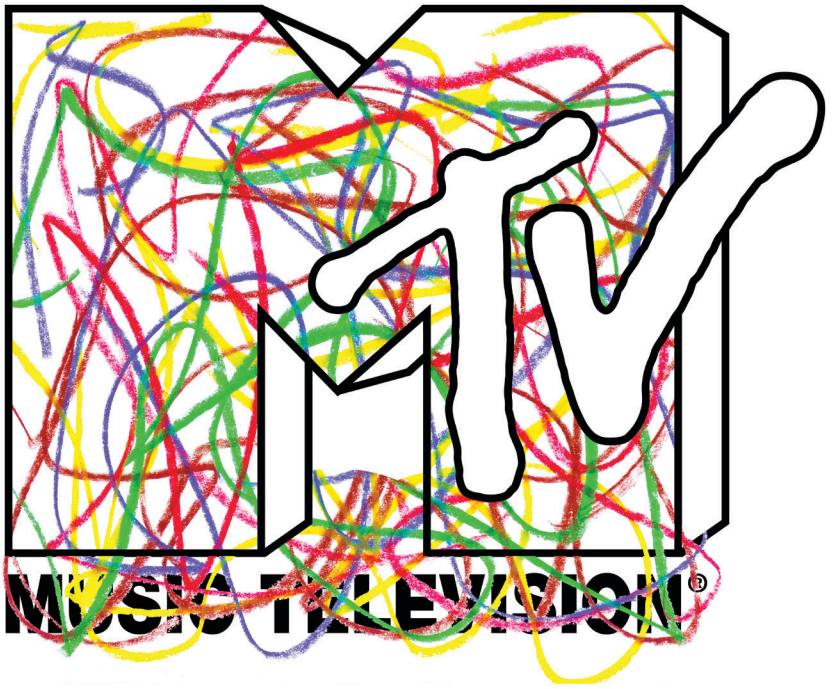
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

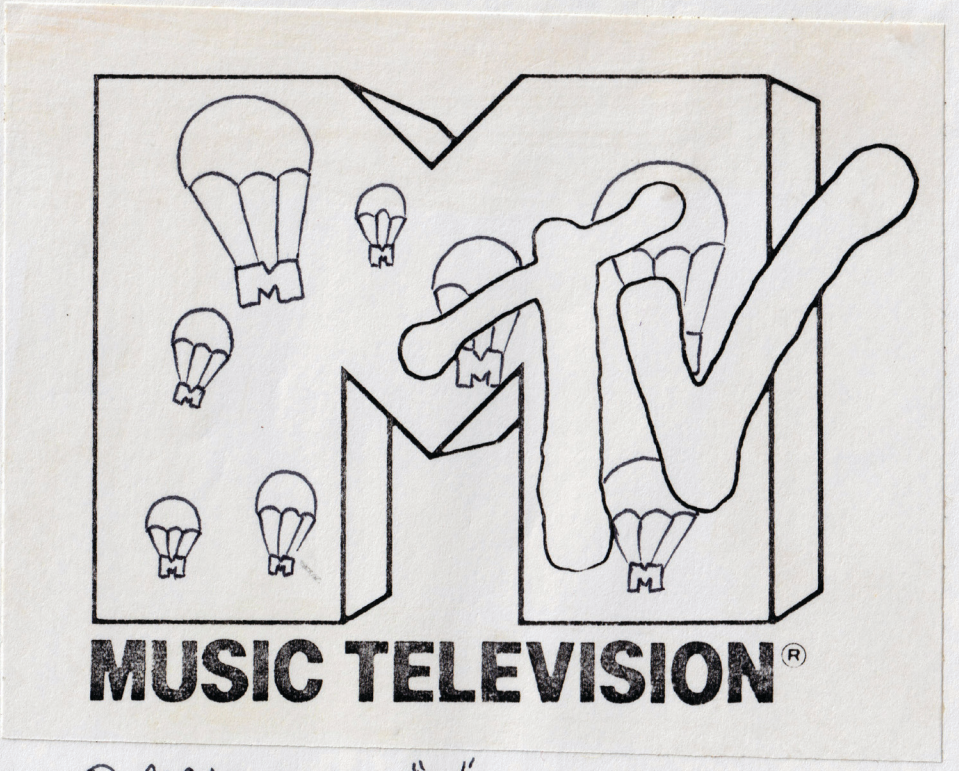
BELLA
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®
D&G
DOLCE & GABBANA
CONVERSE
CONVERSE

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MUSIC TELEVISION®

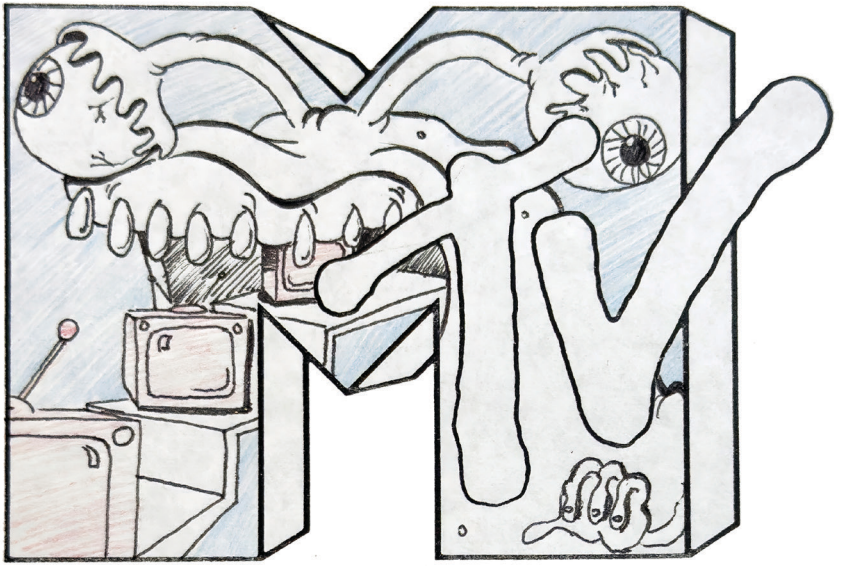

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

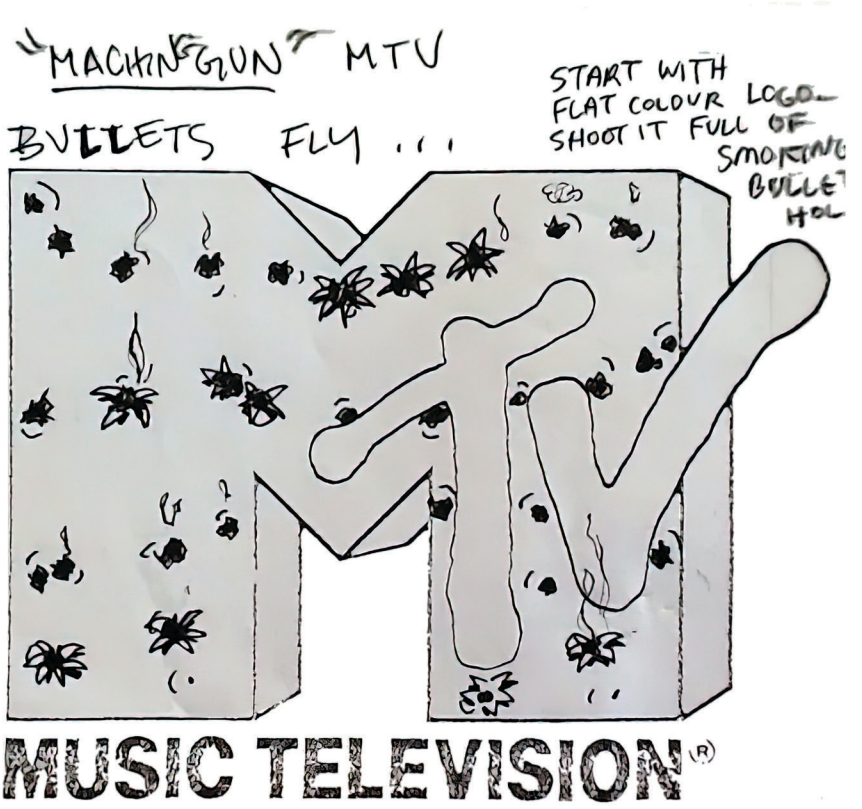


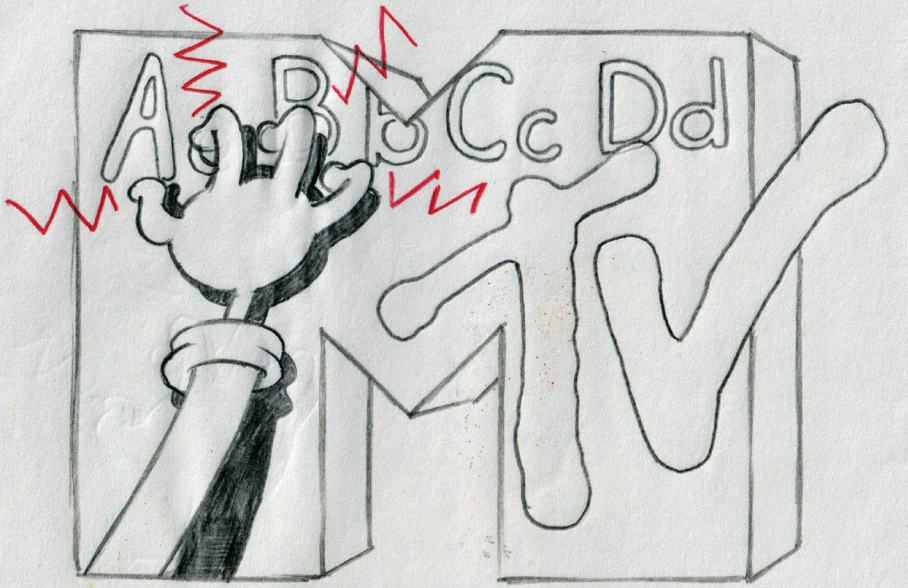
① PARACHUTING "M"S

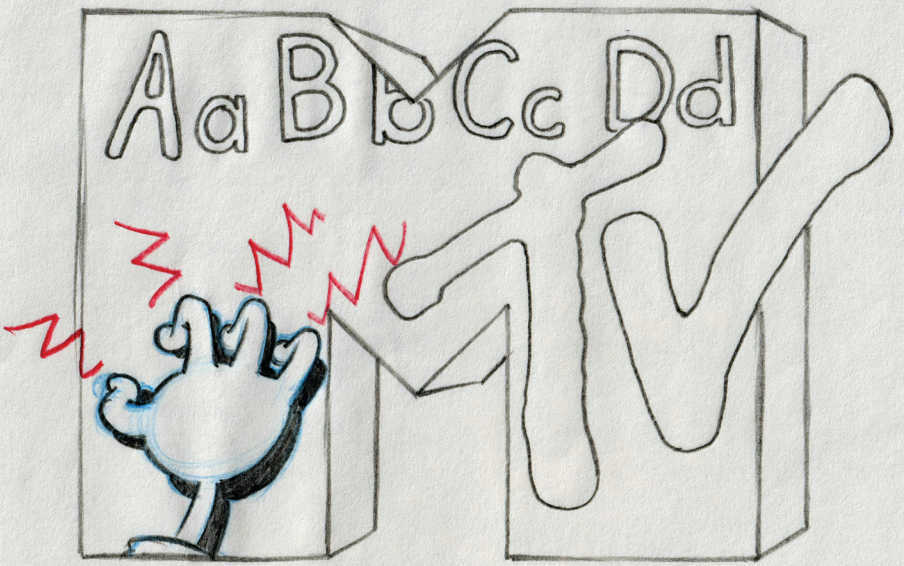
MTV MONSTER —
T.V SETS MOVE DOWN
ON ESCALATOR TONGUE



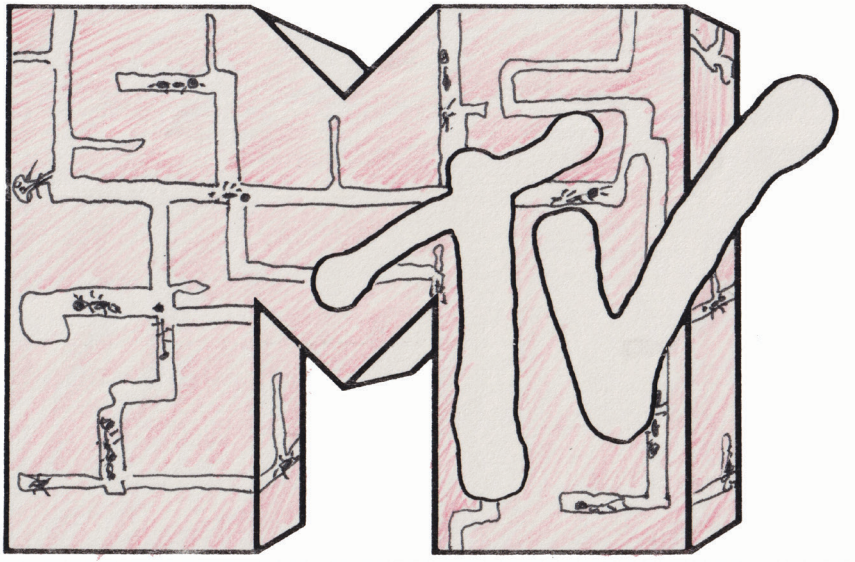
~~SOUND~~
SOUND FX : LION ROAR ?!!


"MACHINEGUN" MTV
BULLETS FLY . . .
START WITH FLAT COLOUR LOGO
SHOOT IT FULL OF
MUSIC TELEVISION®


A B C c D d
MTV

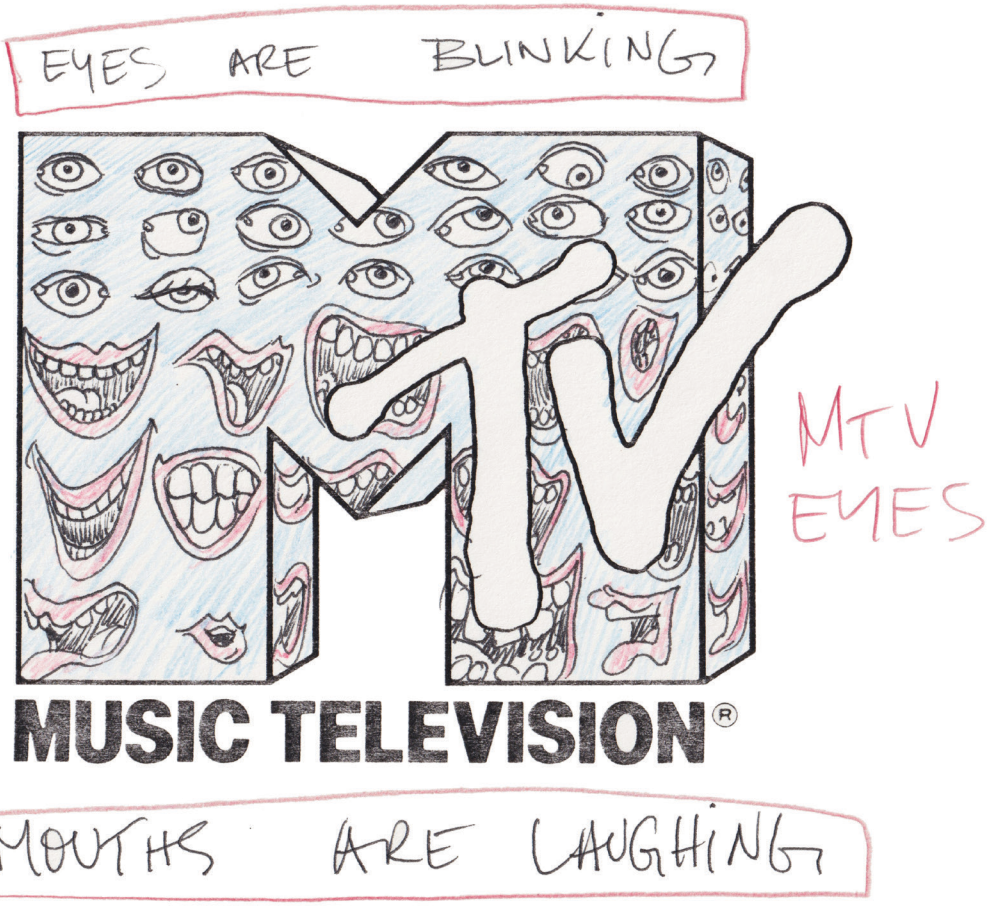

Aa Bb Cc Dd
MTV

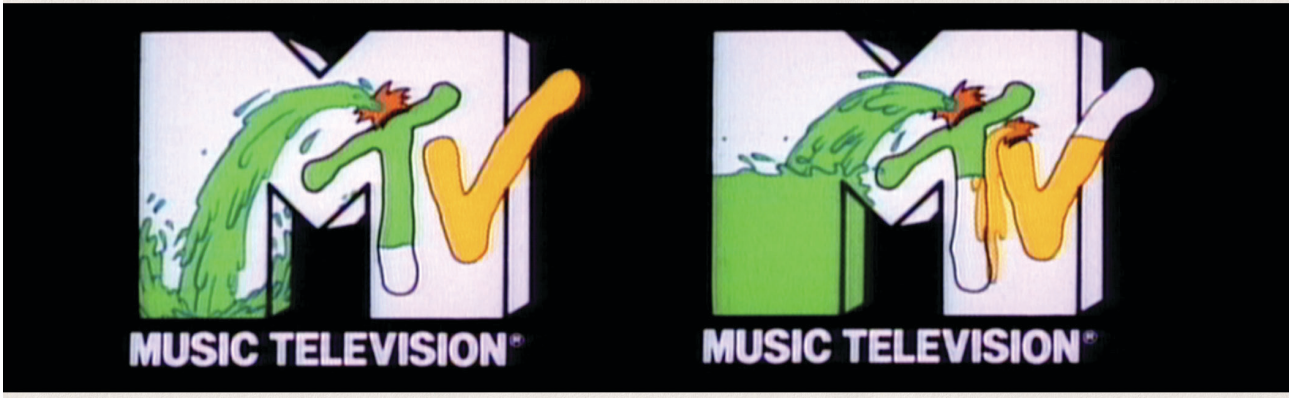
MTV — ANT FARM



ANTS MOVE AROUND

SFX: CONSTRUCTION NOISE

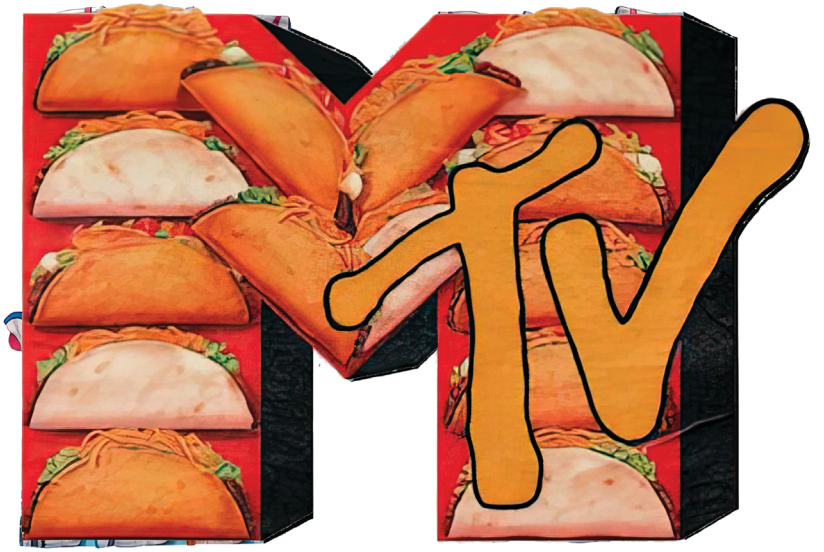

EYES ARE BLINKING
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®
MTV EYES
MOUTHS ARE LAUGHING
SFX: LAUGHTER . . .



SPURT M

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

HOT NUMBER



“MTV. It works for me.”

SOUL MUSIC

“MTV. It works for me.”

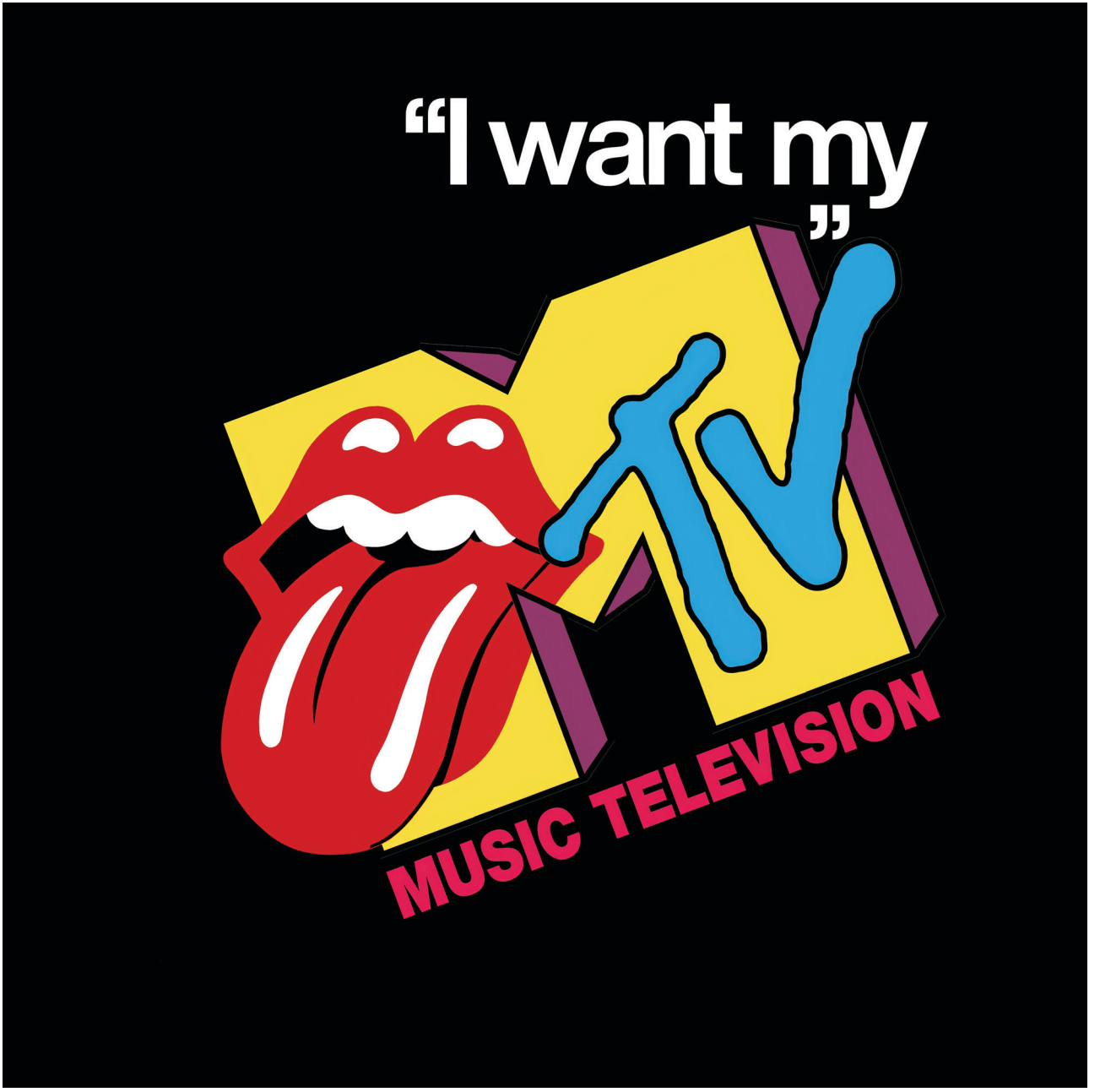
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®


"I want my
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

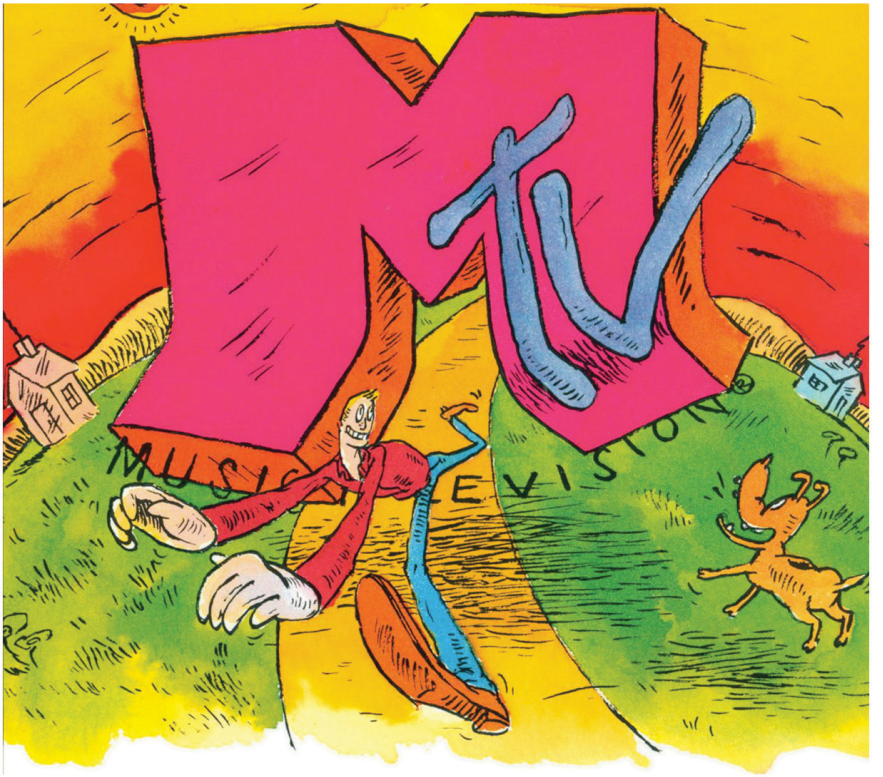
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™

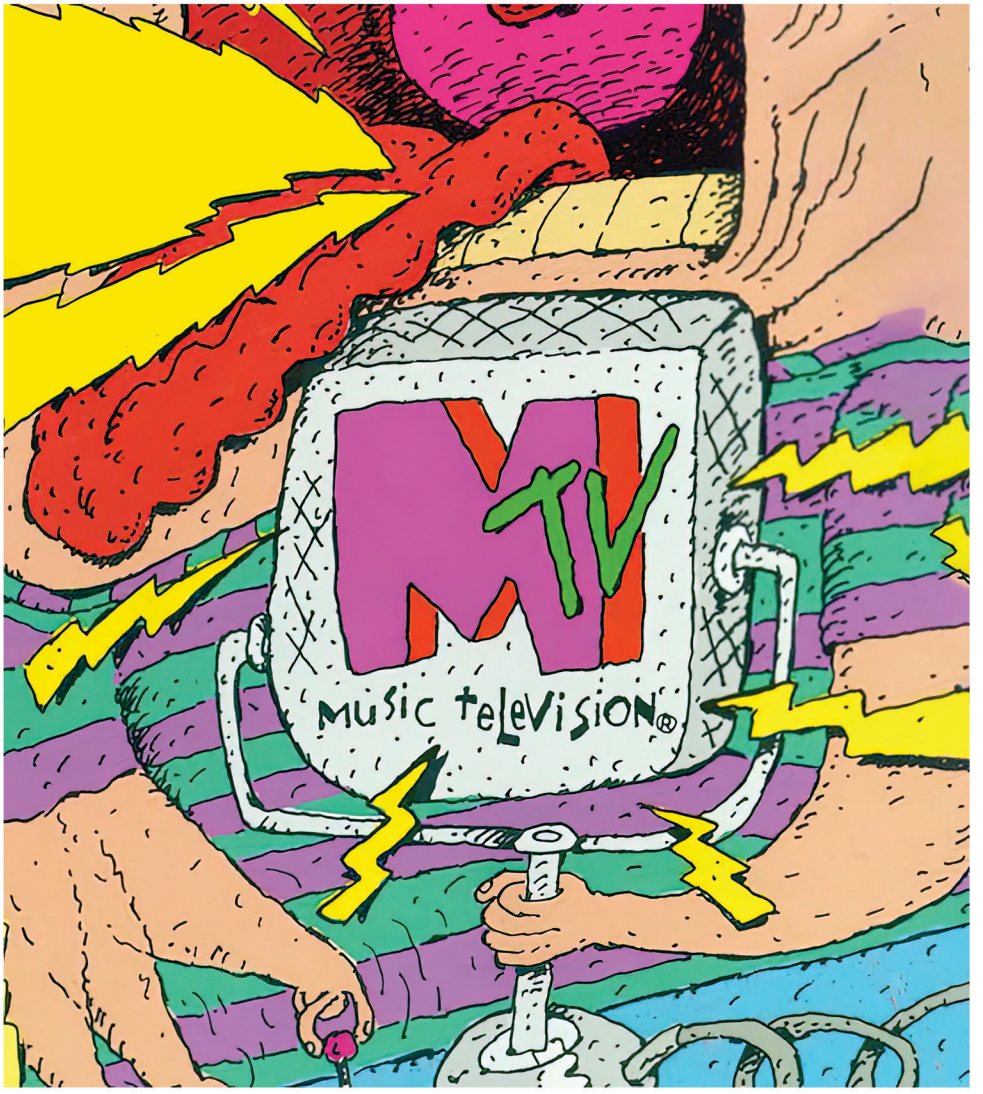
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

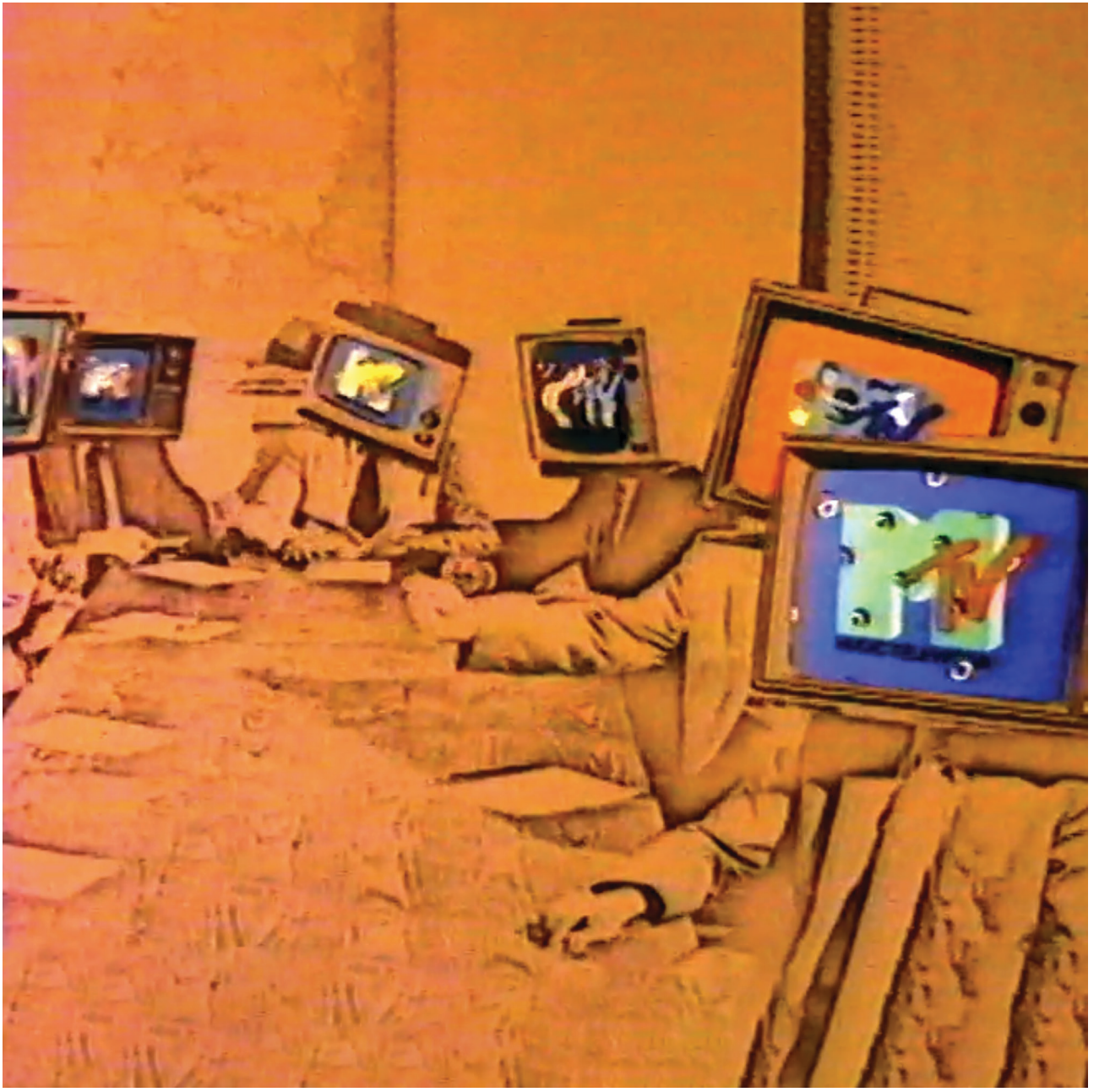
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

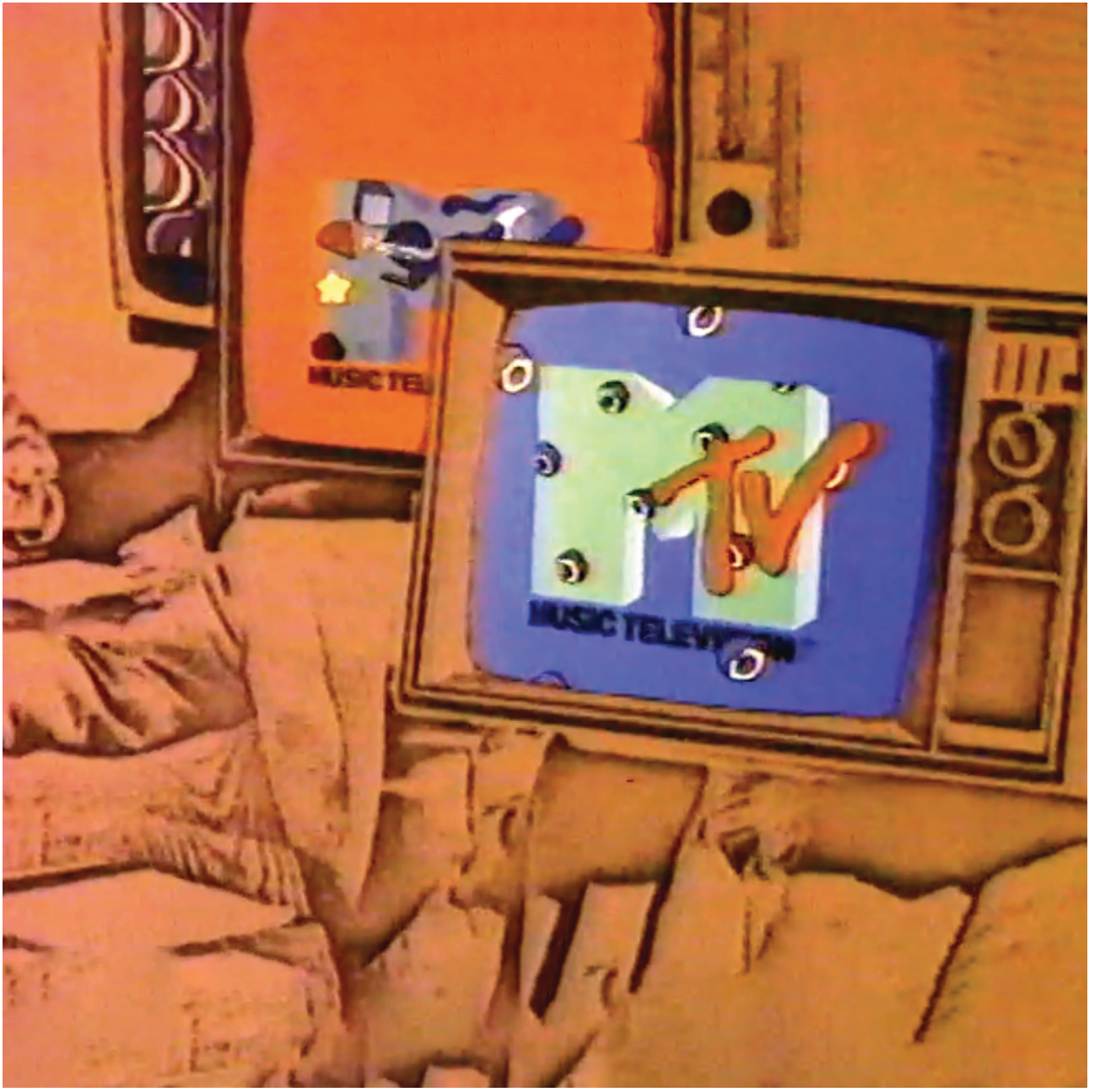

MTV


MTV
music television®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®



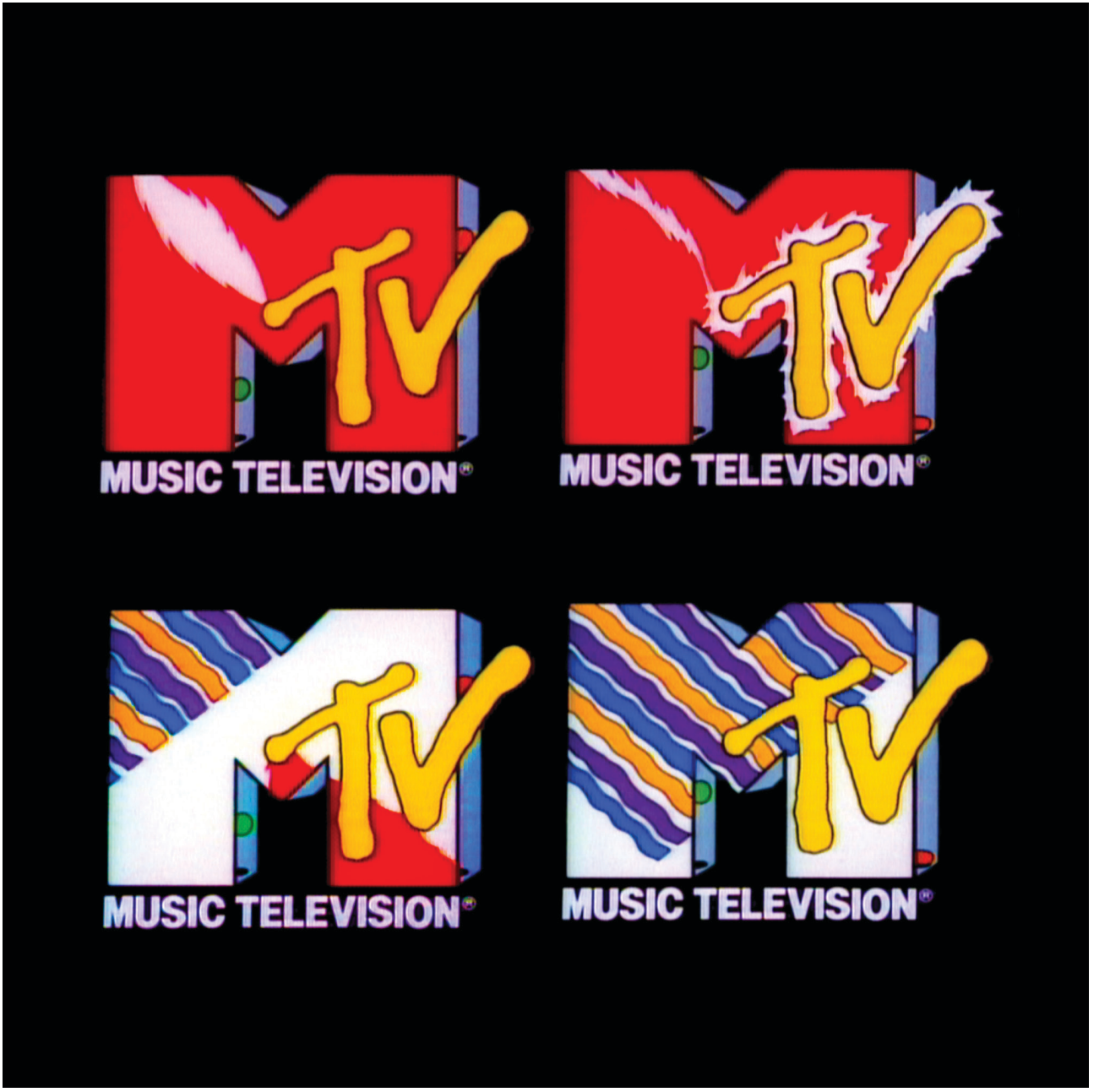

MUSIC TEL
MUSIC TELEVI

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

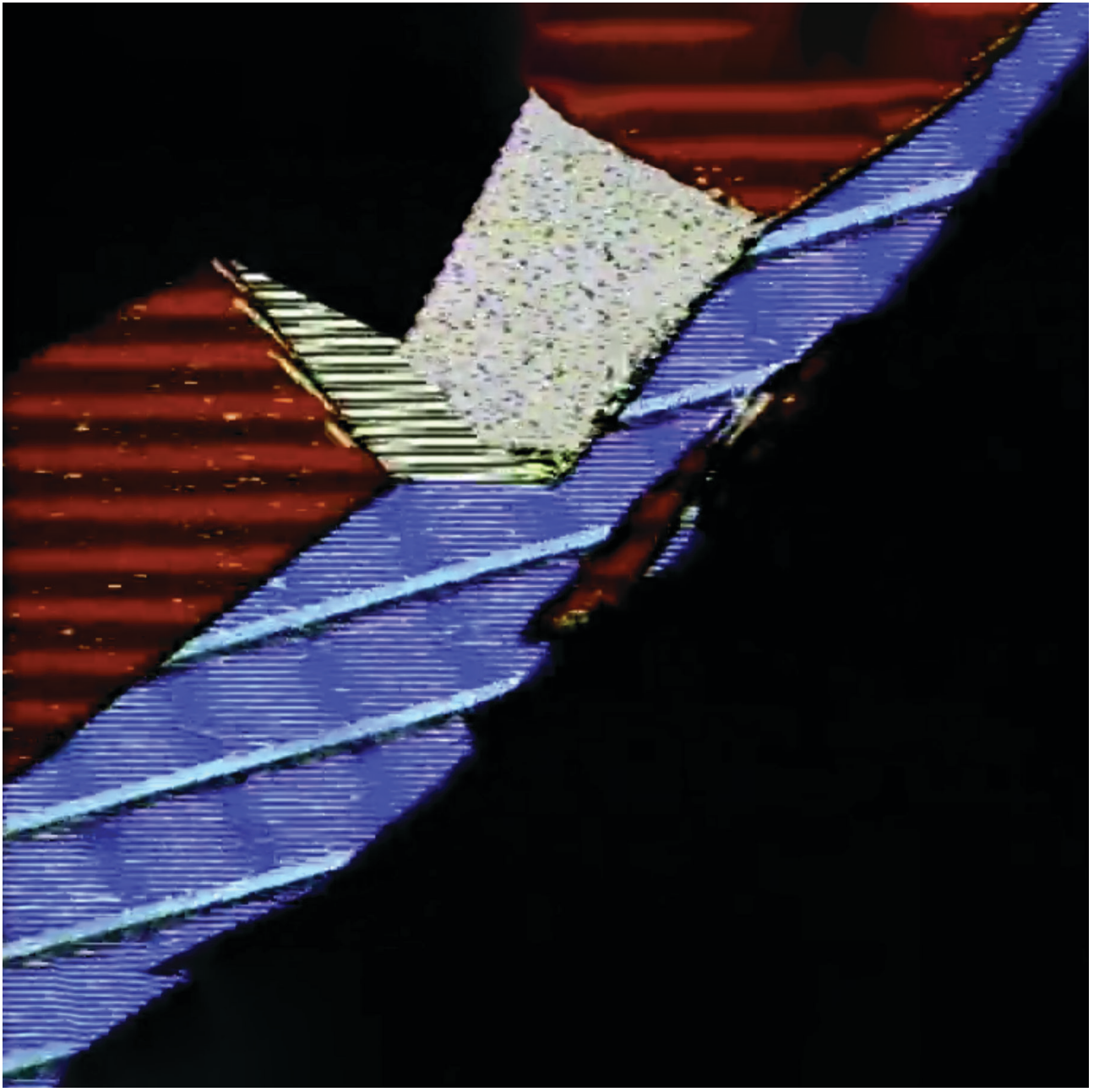
MUSIC TELEVISION™

MUSIC TELEVISION™

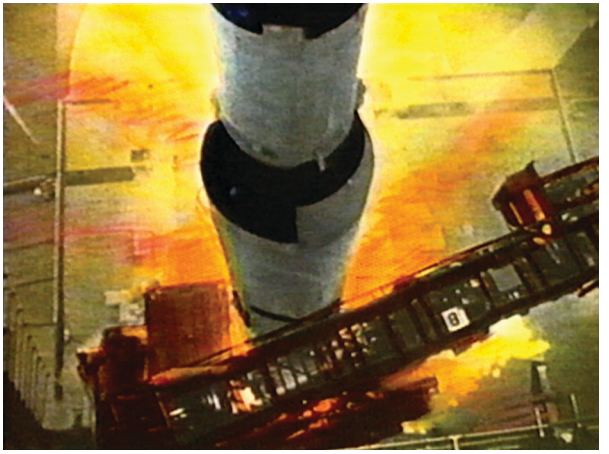

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

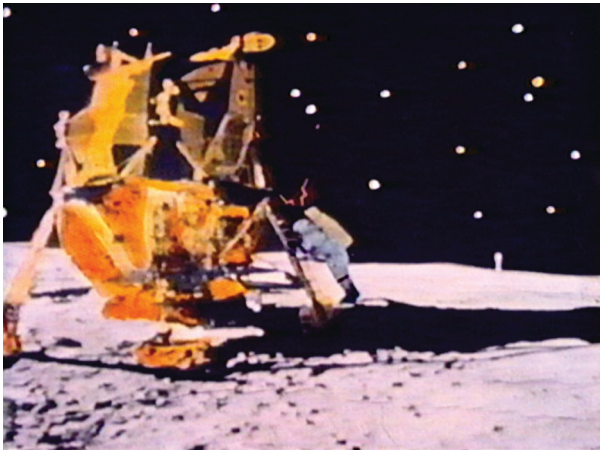
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

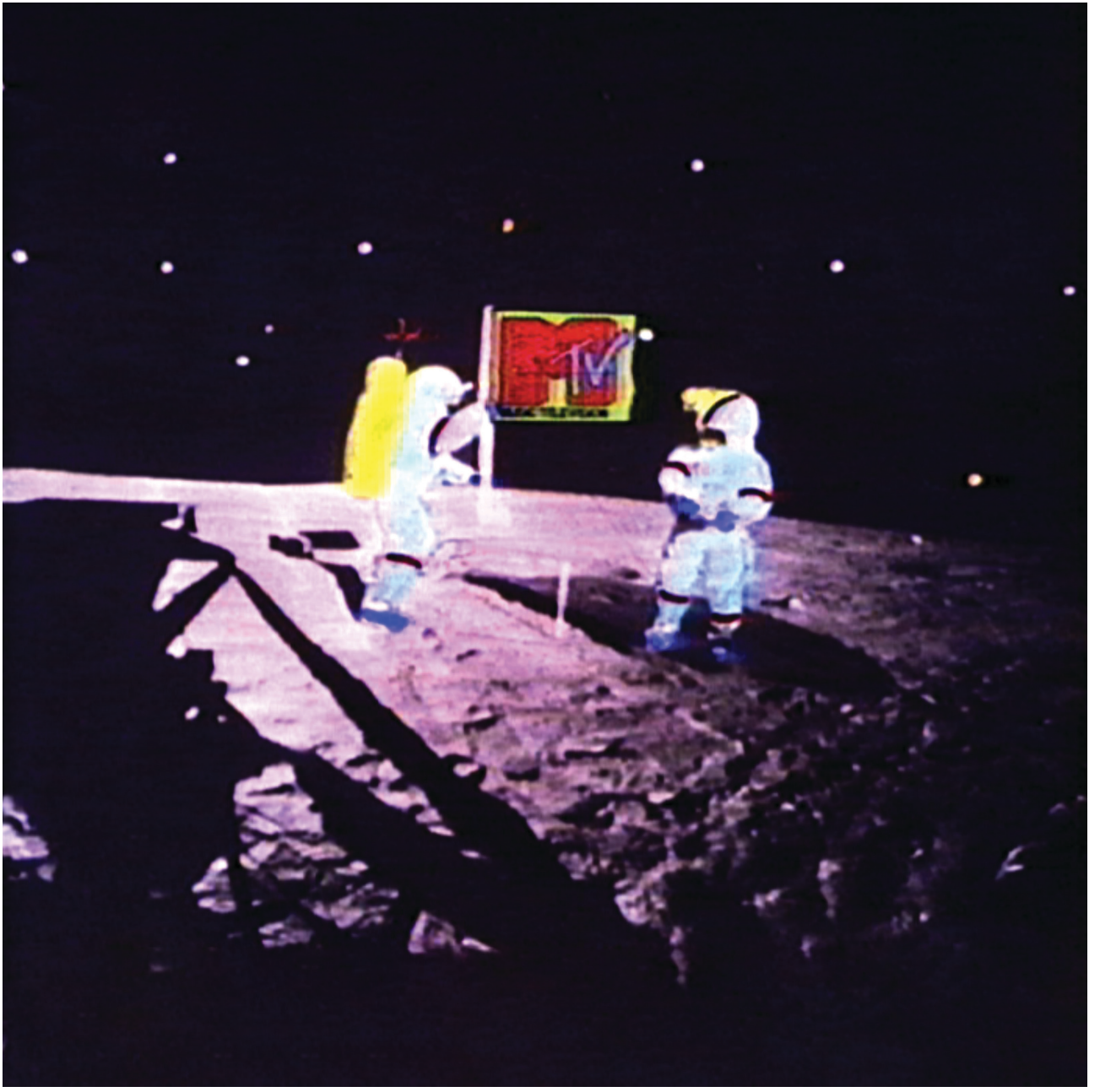
MUSIC TELEVISION



MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION



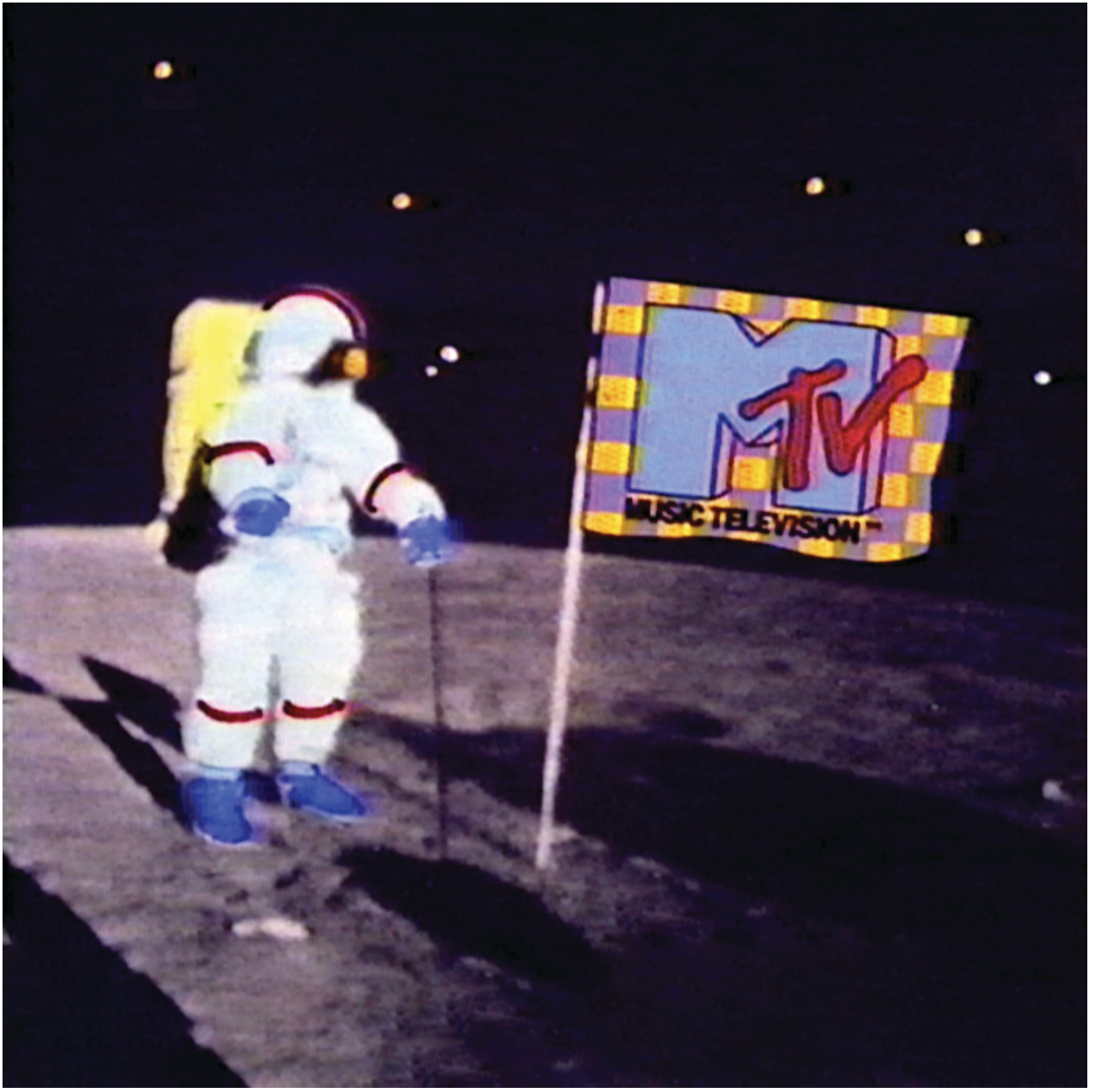


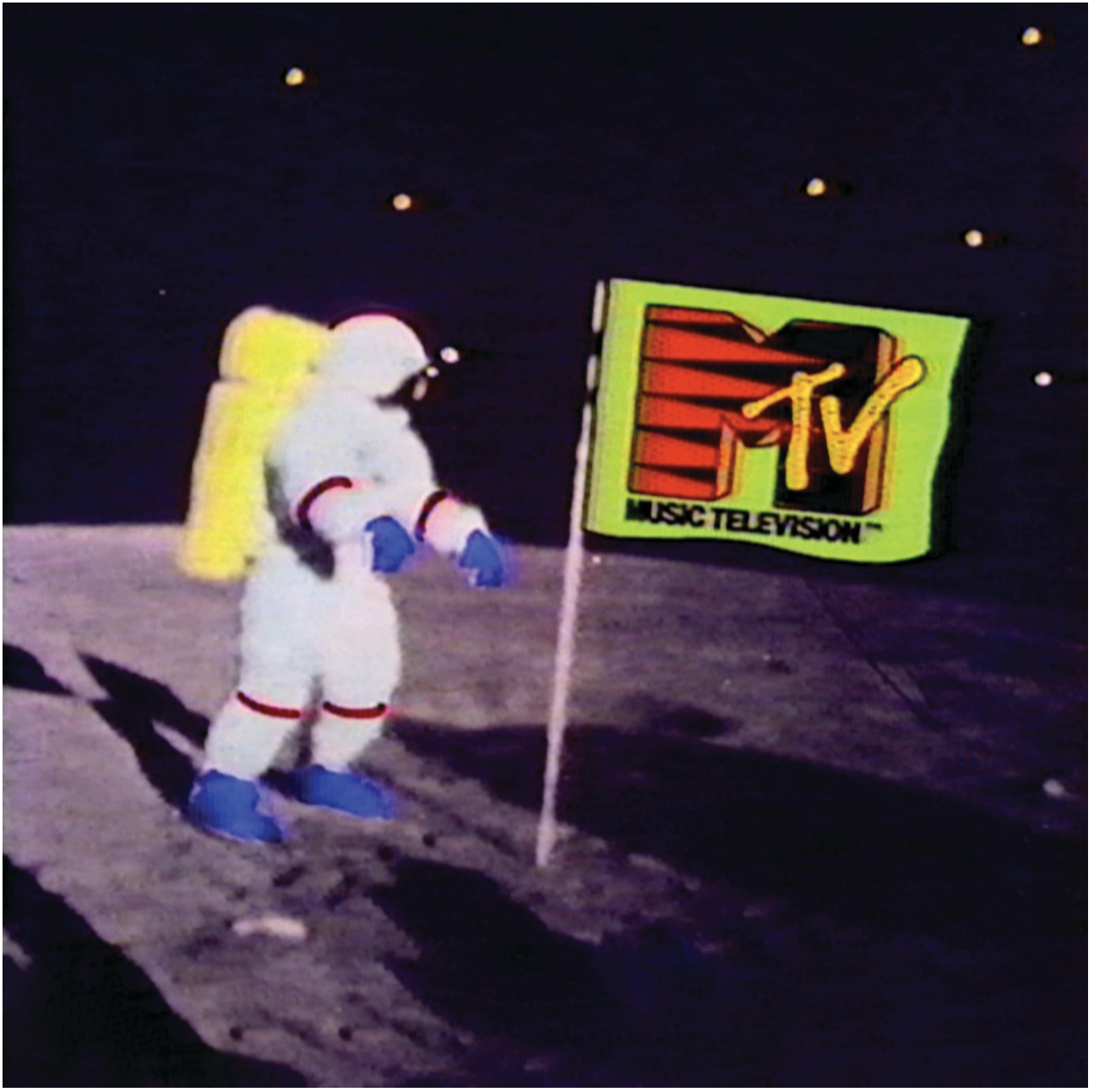

MTV

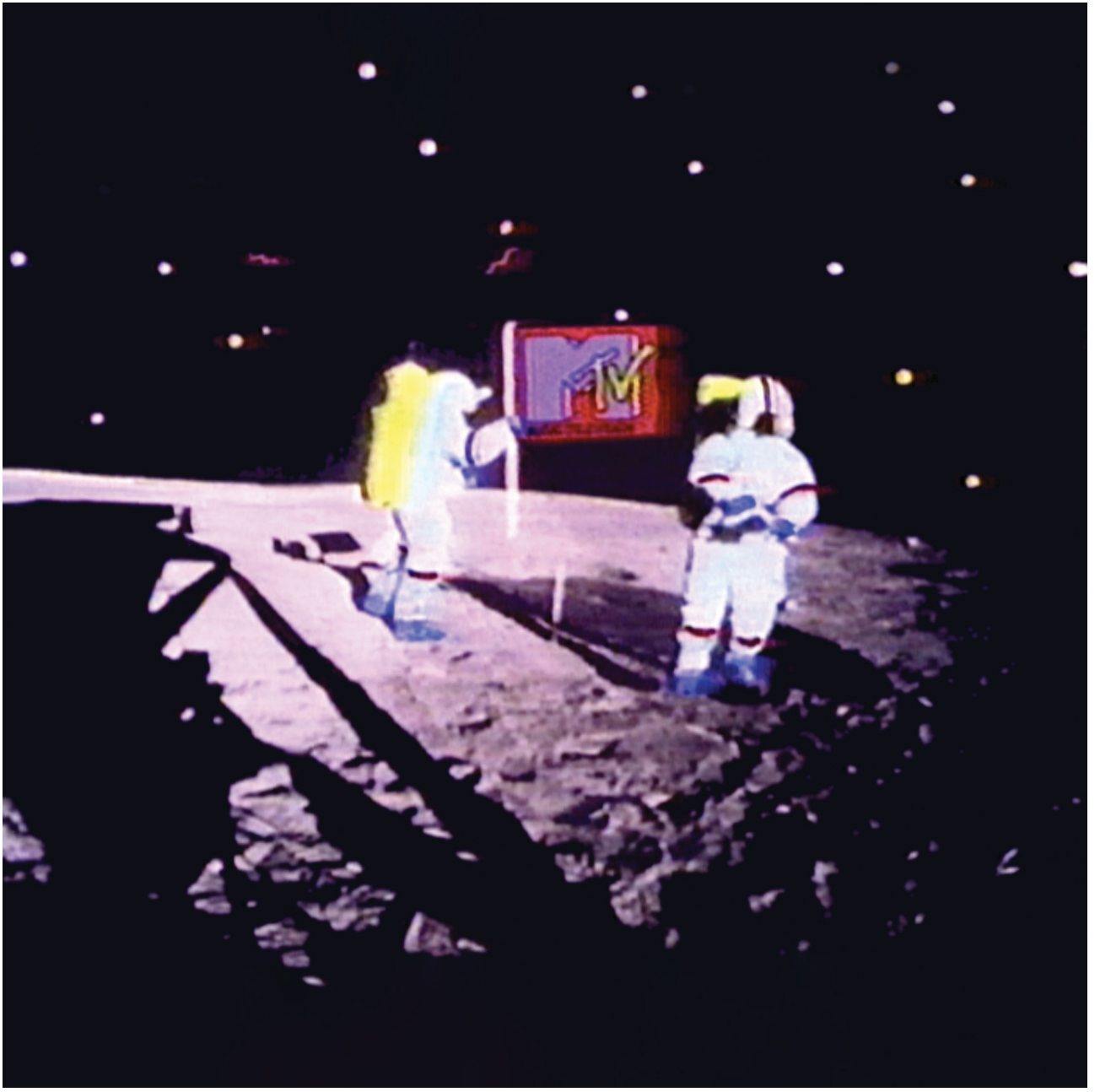
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

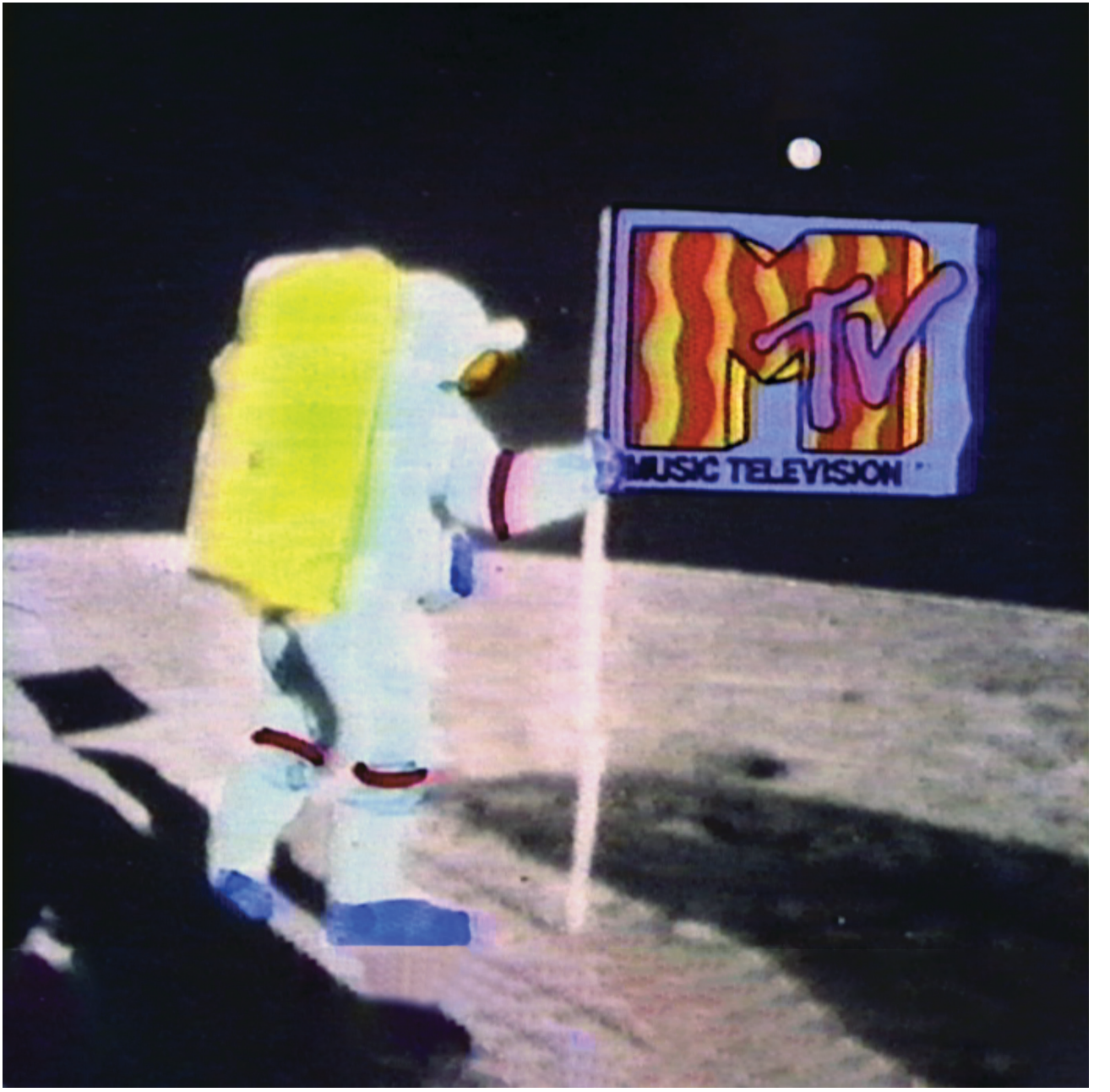
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION
MTV

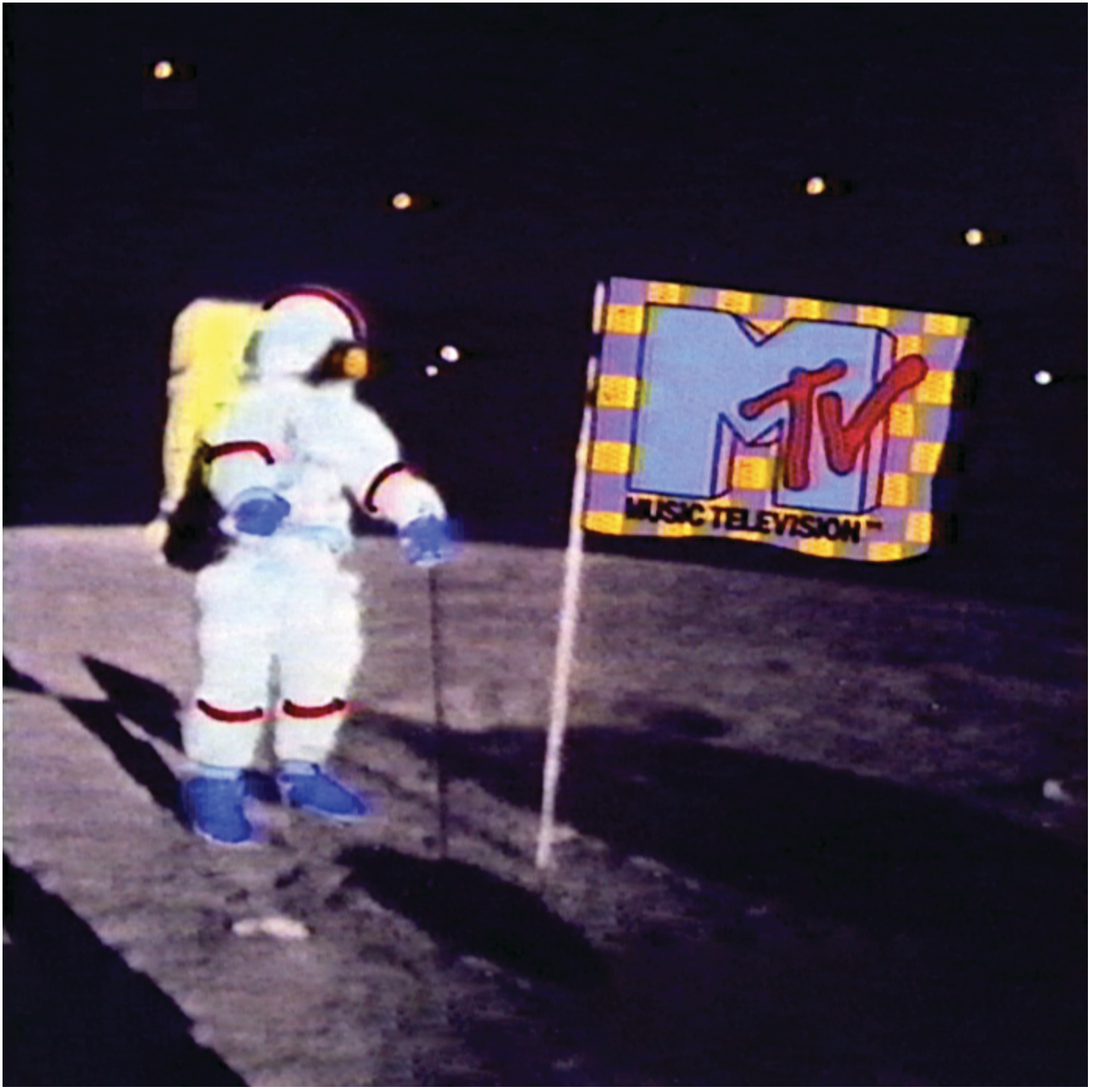

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION


MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION™


MTV


MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION


MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION
MTV

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

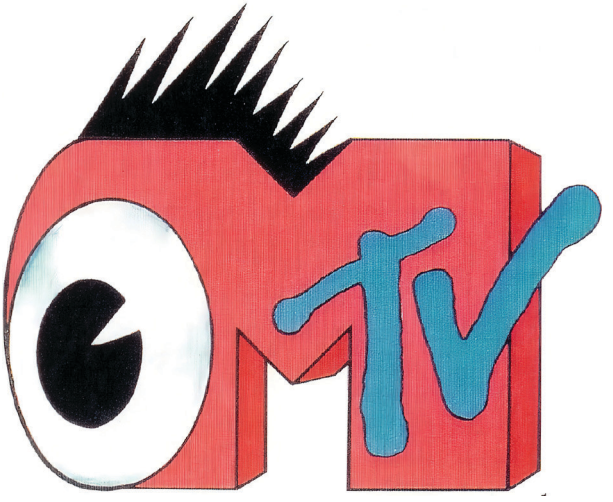
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION

For all the influence the MTV graphics have had, not much has been written about them. Probably because we were all media people, rather than directly from the graphic design community, we never really worked the press on behalf of ourselves.



But, the Oscar winning animator Jon Canemaker is also a dedicated historian. He wrote his thoroughly researched story in the September/October 1992 Print Magazine about the logo and its animation ten years after the channel's debut. He gives props to not only Manhattan Design, Alan Goodman and me, but to our MTV successors Abby Terkuhle and John Payson. –FS

...

PRINT Magazine,
October/September 1992

Over the Edge with MTV

By John Canemaker

The decade-old video music channel has

profoundly influenced pop culture, in part through its dealing, innovative animation.

The broadcast phenomenon known as MTV was launched in 1981 by Warner Communications and American Express with a certain amount of skepticism and worry about its potential fur success. Robert Pittman, then Warner/Amex's 27-year-old director of 24-hour cable service programming (now president and CEO of Quantum Media), had sold his corporate bosses on a concept for a video music channel "with no programs, no beginning, no middle, no end."

After a decade, there is no doubting MTV's enormous success and impact on popular culture. It has influenced fashion. graphic design, music, and movies, as well as our attitudes about television and advertising, and even our concept of time. The idea for a TV music service was not new, but Pittman's vision and its execution were. "We realized that almost all TV was narrative in form," wrote Pittman in the Los Angeles Times last year. "The appeal of music, however, has nothing to do with that structure. Music is about emotion and attitude—it makes you feel. It moves you. Within the creation of MTV. we changed the form of TV to fit the form of music, as opposed to trying to fit music into a narrative structure.

In opposition to the practice of the big three tele-

vision networks, which broadcast a variety of fare to attract the widest possible general audience, MTV would "narrowcast," targeting an audience between the ages of 12 and 35—that is. Baby boomers and the generation that came after them. The music would be their music: rock-'n'- roll, and all that that implies.

"It was meant to drive a 55-year-old person crazy," MTV Chairman/CEO [Tom Freston] told the Washington Post in 1989. Conceived as a free-form, open-ended visual showcase of rock-'n'- roll. MTV needed a graphic image that bespoke youth and anti-authority/anti-establishment attitudes, something forever-changing, ever-evolving, and totally cool—on-the-edge and in-your-face. The famous MTV logo—numerous 10-second animated station identification spots seen throughout each day for over a decade—conveys all of the above.

Constantly layered and manipulated, the basic blocky M overlapped by a thin, spray-painted TV remains the same, a logo that is now among an exclusive pantheon of instantly recognizable symbols, such as Coca-Cola bottles, Mickey Mouse, and the CBS eye.

The development of the logo and other MTV graphics, and the extensive use of animation on

MTV, was both organic and pragmatic, according to Fred Seibert and Alan Goodman, partners in the advertising agency Fred/Alan, Inc., which produces on- air promos, sales films, and network identifications for MTV, Nickelodeon, and VH-1, among other clients. Seven years ago, Seibert and Goodman were the team that defined, as Seibert recently explained, "the voice, the sound, the content, the ideas behind MTV the reasons it was important.

Both men come from recording and radio backgrounds: Seibert produced jazz records before Robert Pittman hired him in 1980 to create promotions and programming for the 24-hour Movie Channel, the Warner/Amex cable service that preceded MTV. When Seibert volunteered to work simultaneously on the proposed music video channel, he brought on Goodman, who had run the copy department for five years at CBS Records' in-house agency, which made album covers, advertisements for radio, and "promotional films that became known as music videos."

"We grew up in a time when rock-'n'-roll was characterized by album covers, as was the culture of our generation," says Seibert. "These rovers defined what we liked to look at, as well as what we believed in. We tried to create little animated album covers for the new generation."

"The MTV logo and animation," says Goodman, "had so much to do with accidents, with ratings. and the limits of technology at the lime, rather than any artistic vision we had." For example, the 10-second running lime of the ID logos resulted from the inability of the old 2" videotape carts (custom-altered to play in stereo) to cycle cassettes faster. Ten seconds was "interminable" to Seibert and Goodman, who originally wanted three- to four-second IDs, as short as those heard on radio.

They needed an ID that would be memorable to viewers who, in pre-electronic ratings days, wrote down what they watched on TV in a diary. "We were competing against 10, 20 channels and knew we were going to compete against 50, although they didn't exist yet," says Seibert. "We knew we had to create an MTV not for 1980, but for 1990 We had to reach out of the TV set, shake every viewer, and say 'Watch us!"

In developing the image, they considered the nature of rock-'n'-roll—always in a slate of evolution—and its audience, which is always growing up with it and out of it. A certain anti-establishment attitude was apparent among the young Turks who created MTV, most of whom, like Pittman, Seibert, and Goodman, were in their twenties. "We didn't want to follow," explains

Alan Goodman

Seibert. "The hell with that. We wanted to lead with our generation. Why hire some designer or art director who graphically defined the last generation? Let's create our own look."

A kinetic, out-sized symbol glimmered undefined in their imaginations, but because neither idea man could draw, Seibert and Goodman sought a graphic design studio. There was only one such place, they felt, that could make their ideas visible: Manhattan Design, a small office run by friends (Frank Olinsky and Pat Gorman) behind a Ti Chi workshop in Greenwich Village. "Their studio was as big as this table. You tell Warner Brothers and American Express that this is who is going to define their logo—they had a cow!" Seibert exclaims.

Manhattan Design produced about 500 logo designs. "They kept coming back with more." recalls Goodman. "The closest to being accepted was a squeezable musical note grabbed in the ass by a Mickey Mouse-style hand and the notes came out of the fingers. We liked it mainly because it was active. The notes were secondary. Our logo, we thought, should

have action, unlike the CBS eye." Goodman had, in fact, contacted the "CBS logo policeman," who led him a list of rules pertaining to the CBS symbol, e.g., it never moves; it never changes: and it can never be put on gym bags or hats, only on pens (or salesmen and top clients. Goodman went down the menu and said, "We're not going to do this, we're not going to do that, we're not going to do this."

The big M design was on the bottom of a pile of the last 10 sketches submitted, with the TV originally graffitied in, punk- like. "We said that one's it. Go and develop it more, Frank came back with lots of color treatments. 'Here's one.' he'd say, 'that looks as if the M hadn't shaved and the TV was shaving cream: here's one where it's a taxi with yellow stripes; here's one with the bottom like linoleum; here's one all spattered.' We liked each one better than the last," says Goodman.

"It filled the screen and was dimensionalized from the first. It reminds us of Superman comics and the 20th Century-Fox logo. It's grand, big. The spray-painted TV implied action. There was the M and something was done to it. The shadow implied dimension and 3D image. It was more than a 2-D image. It was a logo that willingly accepted juvenile delinquency!"

At the same time the logo was being developed, Seibert and Goodman were creating short snippets of sound to match the as-yet-undefined IDs. "For the most visually stunning network ever to launch, we decided to make it sound-based. Build the pictures on top of it, like cartoons," relates Goodman. With no idea how the music would be used, they kept working with musicians until they liked what they heard for 10 seconds and added it to a master reel.

"Again, it was pragmatic." Goodman explains. "We're sound guys, We started in radio and we know music. TV is a talking toaster, if it doesn't sound right, who cares what it looks like." Seibert concurs: "II we put brilliant sound together with medium-to-good pictures, we'd have something great. If we put great sound with great pictures, everyone would salute."

Seibert and Goodman pinned the different versions of the MTV logo on the wall for days and thought about them. Minutes before their big presentation meeting with the powers-that-be at Warner/Amex, "we decided to use them all at once, all the time." Seibert recalls. One of the marketing heads (an older man) balked ("I hate this! It's a piece of junk!"), but he was overruled. "Running on pure adrenaline and instinct." the creative team had six weeks before launch date to come up

with nine videos versions of the logo.

They chose animation as a medium for yet another practical reason. Explains Seibert, “Virtually all the videos at that time were in live-action. We knew our M had to be different to stand out.” The pre-packaged sound biles were to be handed out to selected animation studios. The only problem was that Seibert and his colleagues didn’t know any animators. “We knew Disney’s name, that was all,” he recalls. They tailed in 100 sample reels from trade paper ads and “hated one more than the other.”

A few rock- ‘n’ -roll spots using Xerography (Xeroxed photos manipulated under the camera frame-by-frame) appeared on a reel from a small company in San Francisco called Colossal Pictures. “All of a sudden.” says Seibert, “everything else was Doc Severinson and this was Little Richard. These guys had the beat! They got it! We jumped up and down. 'It can be done!’” They sought reels from other little-known independent animators, instead of large established cartoon shops, who wanted a package of spots for big bucks.

“Anything else that anyone was doing, we weren’t going to do,” says Seibert. Indeed, this idea became a kind of rallying cry. They surveyed the

standard cel techniques used in the studios and went in the other direction- finding animators who specialized in alternative frame-by frame designs using clay, cut-out, puppets, and pastels, crayon, or watercolors on paper. “We wanted to do what everybody else was absolutely ignoring.” Budgets were small and schedules tight, but the independents eagerly undertook the work, for MTV offered a rare national showcase for personal, quirky, non-traditional animation.

Colossal Pictures filtered a group of West Coast animators through their company to MTV, to join a growing number of colleagues from the East and points north, including Eli Noyes, Broadcast Arts, George Griffin, Jerry Lieberman, and Joey Album in New York, Olive Jar in Boston, and International Rocketship in Vancouver, “We wanted on-the-fringe people, like us, People we felt comfortable with,” says Seibert. “To this day, we have our closest relationships with the animation community.”

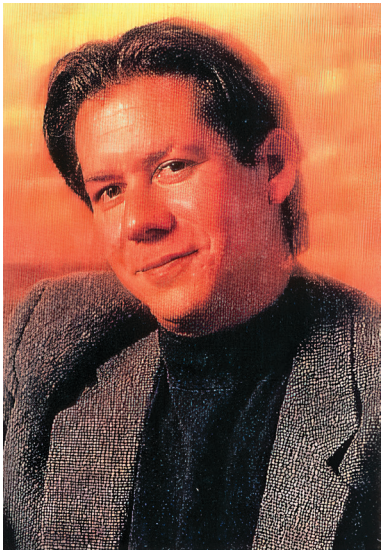
Ironically. "Man on the Moon,” one of the most famous of the earliest animated logos, with a now-familiar electric guitar riff, was animated by Buzzco, a commercial animation studio. “At the time.” says Seibert, “we shared space with Buzz Potemkin, head of Buzzco, and we liked him. We said to him we felt MTV was as big a TV event as

ever happened; it was going to change TV that much. We had this idea of copying the biggest TV event in world history—the man walking on the moon—usurp it to ourselves, the juvenile delinquents of MTV," Potemkin agreed to produce the spot, which used public domain NASA footage of a rocket blasting off, cross-dissolving into stills of the 1969 landing on the moon. The American flag was cut out and various types of MTVs were substituted. The original piece, intercut with coming attractions, was 10 seconds, so Seibert and Goodman looped one of their prepackaged, free-form music pieces (a guitar solo) three times.

Over the last 10 years, the popularity of animation on MTV has been enhanced by top rock performers using the medium creatively in videos. The increased number of videos using animation, and using non-traditional frame-by-frame graphics, is a direct result of the audiovisual impact of the off-the-wall I0-second logos.

Among the more memorable videos in terms of imagery and an impressive variety of unusual animation techniques are "Sledgehammer," in which Peter Gabriel's face and body and other three-dimensional objects are pixilated; "Opposites Attract," which features Paula Abdul's tap adagio with a cartoon alley cat (modeled nostalgically on Gene Kelly's workout with Jerry the Mouse);

"Harlem Shuffle." which intercuts Mick Jagger with Bob Clampett-like cartoon cats: "Hard Woman," in which Jagger appears with a computer-generated female; and "Leave Me Alone," in which Michael Jackson combines photo animation and Xerography of himself and Elizabeth Taylor in a surreal Jacksonland amusement park.



Abby Terkuhle

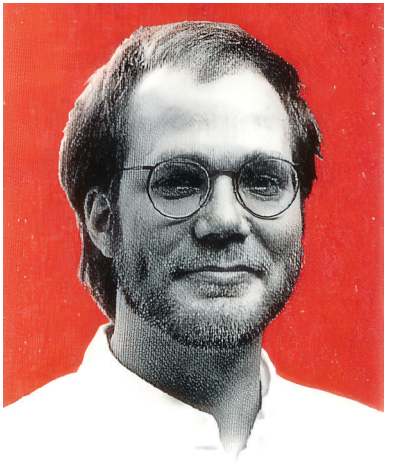
MTV's decade of continuous showcasing of all kinds of animation has been an important component in its public acceptance, which is at an all-time high. Always on the lookout for things other people are ignoring. MTV itself continues to compete with its own brand of on-the-edge animation.

John Payson, director of creative, and Abby Terkuhle, VP-creative, are currently responsible for all MTV on-air promotions, as well as the overall look and packaging of ongoing and new programs, contests, and image productions, including network IDs and ad breaks. Their commitment to animation on MTV is strong.

"Animation is a direct line from the director's brain to the screen" says Payson. "It's become a viable adult entertainment medium. There's no limit to what the imagination can do." adds

Terkuhle, who keeps abreast of current animation designs and artists by attending international animation festivals around the world. The team produces a dozen or more logos annually, though now says Terkuhle. “We have global talents to lap into, including MTV Europe. MTV Asia. MTV Brazil, and soon,” international affiliates that have been established with MTV’s growing success.

Three years ago, Payson and Terkuhle took steps to develop and expand MTV’s animation offerings in a number of imaginative ways. They commissioned “short form” pieces (films longer than 10 seconds) to play between videos, such as the serialized “Stevie and Zorn” by Joe Zorn, “Brute” from Britain’s Mike Smith and Malcolm Bennett, and “Slow Bob in the Lower Dimensions.” from Henry Selick on the West Coast.



John Payson

With MTV U.S. and MTV Europe, they sponsored an international competition for IDs, and, more recently, animated public service announcements addressing world problems and solutions. Over 600 entries were received, 10 of which will be aired on MTV affiliates throughout the world.

Showcased on late-night weekends is a series originally produced for Nickelodeon. "The Ren &

Stimpy Show.“ an anarchic throwback to the wild, stretchy squashy old-Style Warners/Bob Clampett animation beloved by boomers, who have made the show an instant cult favorite.

Most provocative of the current animation projects, however, is MTV's "Liquid Television," a half hour animated variety series combining “underground animation, over-the-edge graphics, and stories from beyond the fringe.” Colossal Pictures (the original MTV animation supplier, now a large and diversified animation/live action producer) shopped a proposal for an animated magazine first to HA! and then to MTV. With changes, “it was perfect for us,” says Terkuhle. “sort of a melting pot of different animators showcasing what we were doing in short forms and IDs in a half-hour show.”

Now in its second season, “Liquid Television.” with both self-contained and serialized segments, pushes the edge in animation looks, content, and format. Techniques are dazzlingly eclectic, ranging from traditional cel, 3-D puppets, and clay, to computer paintbox. Fifty-seven different segments composed the first “Liquid TV” shows, with nine Colossal Pictures directors creating segments and 13 other directors providing more. According to the trade journal R.E.R, “All of these pieces had to be woven into a continuous tapestry

of animation and sound by Colossal/Music Amex Audio Post-Production," which is based in San Francisco.

The programming is varied; there are the violent "Dangerous Puppets," who beats the Stuffing out of one another: and "Aeon flux," an action/intrigue, slick-looking cel animation serial, described as "non-stop death" by Advertising Age. "Stick Figure Theatre" presents reductions of scenes from famous movies, plays, newsreels, and music videos, performed by a forgotten troop of line drawings from "the other side of the inkwell." "Invisible Hand's" is a multi-plane animation by underground comix artist Richard Sala. "Art School Girls of Doom" uses live-action against collaged backgrounds. Clay animator David Daniels's "Buzz Box" uses the so-called "strato-cut" technique, which involves slicing through a lump of clay that has sequential images inside of it. "Ms. Lydia's Makeover," by director/writer Gordon Clark, employs Macintosh Photo Shop and Quantel Paintbox to present "Eastern European expert" Ms. Lydia, who weekly enhances the physical features of well-known celebrities with a "beauty computer," and whose personal credo is "the better you look, the more you see."

"We're more into animation than special effects," Payson told Advertising Age recently. "We're more

interested in animation per se—that direct line to the unconscious. We think simple, which is something I always strive for. Effects for effects sake are not what we're looking for."

"Liquid Television' is the greatest," comments Alan Goodman. "Payson is brilliant," says Fred Seibert, "and we could never produce what Abby [Terkuhle] produces. 'Liquid' is never going to get big ratings on MTV because for the general audience it's just a little too out there. But it'll do well enough, and it maintains the image MTV has to have. Even if they don't watch it, they have to know it's there, they have to know MTV is pushing the boundaries."

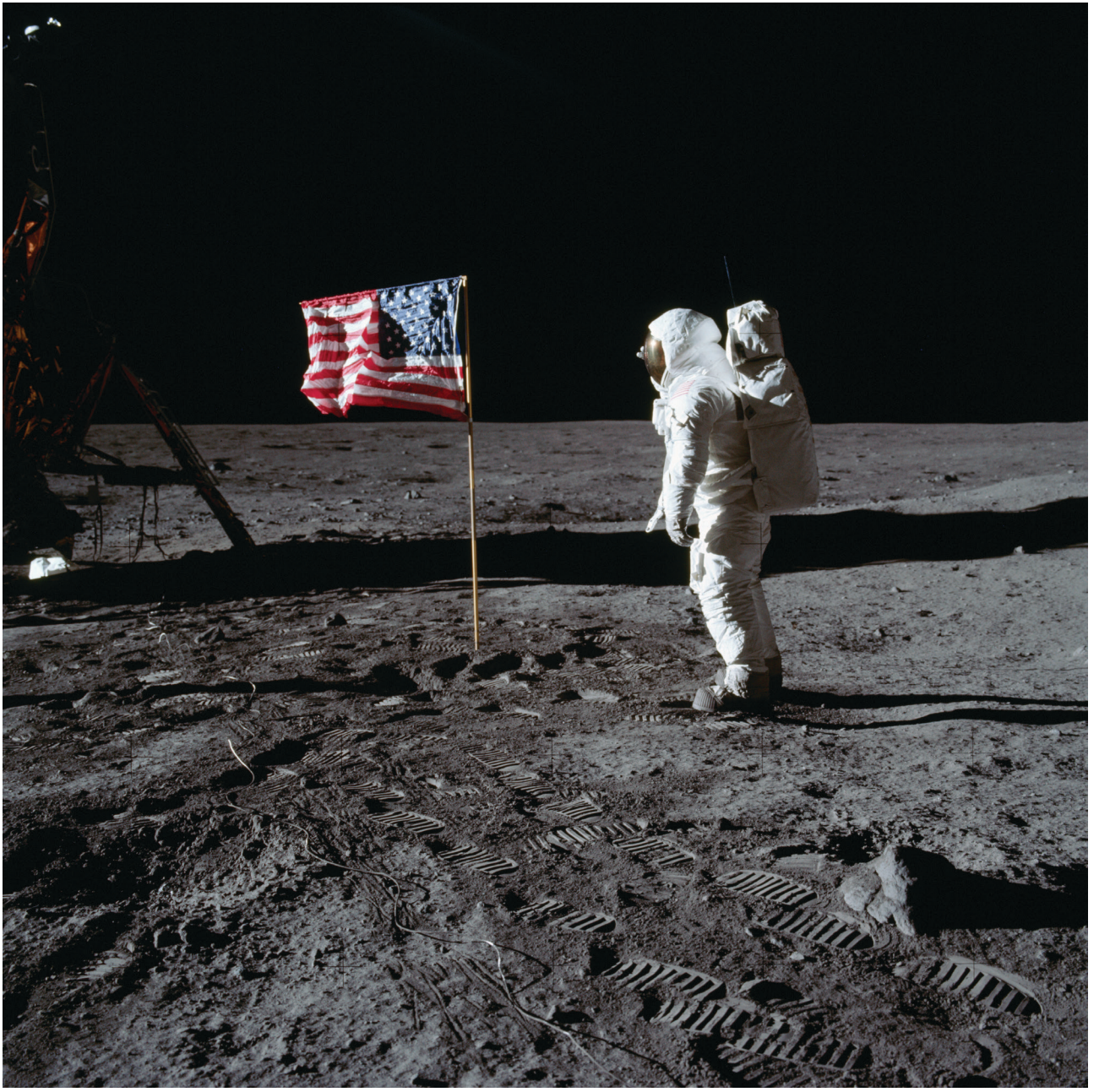
John Payson concurs: "One of the things we've had to overcome in this country is the perception that animation is for kids, light and fluffy and Saturday morning. I like to think MTV is helping to overcome that misconception. We're able to show the potential for this kind of storytelling. We're a small part of a renaissance, something really exciting in the industry-at-large."

...

John Canemaker wrote and directed animation for the IBM-sponsored series The Creative Spirit, *four one-hour PBS programs. He is the author of* Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat *(Pantheon Book 1991) and* Windsor McKay: His Life and Art *(Abbeville Press 1987).*

"MTV No Longer About 'Music'"
–The Wrap

On February 8, 2010, for the frist time in almost 30 years, MTV announced it was officially dropping "Music Television" from it's seminal logo, designed in 1981 by Pat Gorman, Frank Olinsky and Patti Rogoff from Manhattan Design.



MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION ™

Image credits:

David Burd: 114-115
Broadcast Arts, Washington D.C.: 21, 25, 28, 70-71, 108, 109, 112-113, 116-117
Buzzco. Buzz Potamkin, Candy Kugel: 21, 38-61, 104, 105, 142-155, 224-243, 265
Colossal Pictures, San Francisco: 25, 28, 72-79, 110-111, 119, 122-138, 220-223
Fred/Alan, New York: 86-89, 94-101, 103, 118, 120-121, 185-193, 194-195*, 196-197, 208-211, 218-219, 224-243
Alan Goodman, Fred Seibert: 38-61, 265
Jerry Lieberman Productions: 94-05
Manhattan Design: 8, 14, 19, 21-24, 32-37, 62-68, 94-97, 200
MTV/Paramount Global: 31, 69, 84, 85, 97**, 102, 139, 156-184, 198-199, 242-243
NASA: 264
Marv Newland/International Rocketship, Vancouver: 120-121, 185-193, 211, 218-219
Dale Pon, George Lois, LPG/Pon, New York: Pages 1, 27, 68, 80-83, 142-155, 201-207
Elena Seibert: 250
Fred Seibert: 11
Tom Pomposello Productions, New York: 90-93, 106, 107
Peter Wallach: 212-217

*Courtesy of Robert Zeltman **Courtesy of Nancy Kadner Feingold

About the editor:

Fred Seibert is one of the world's leading independent cartoon producers. From June 1980-April 1983, he was the original creator director and a co-founder of MTV: Music Television.

THE ART OF MTV

THE MTV: MUSIC TELEVISION LOGO

AUGUST 1, 1981 - FEBRUARY 8, 2010

EDITED BY FRED SEIBERT

THE FREDFILMS PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY #9

I want
my
MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION®